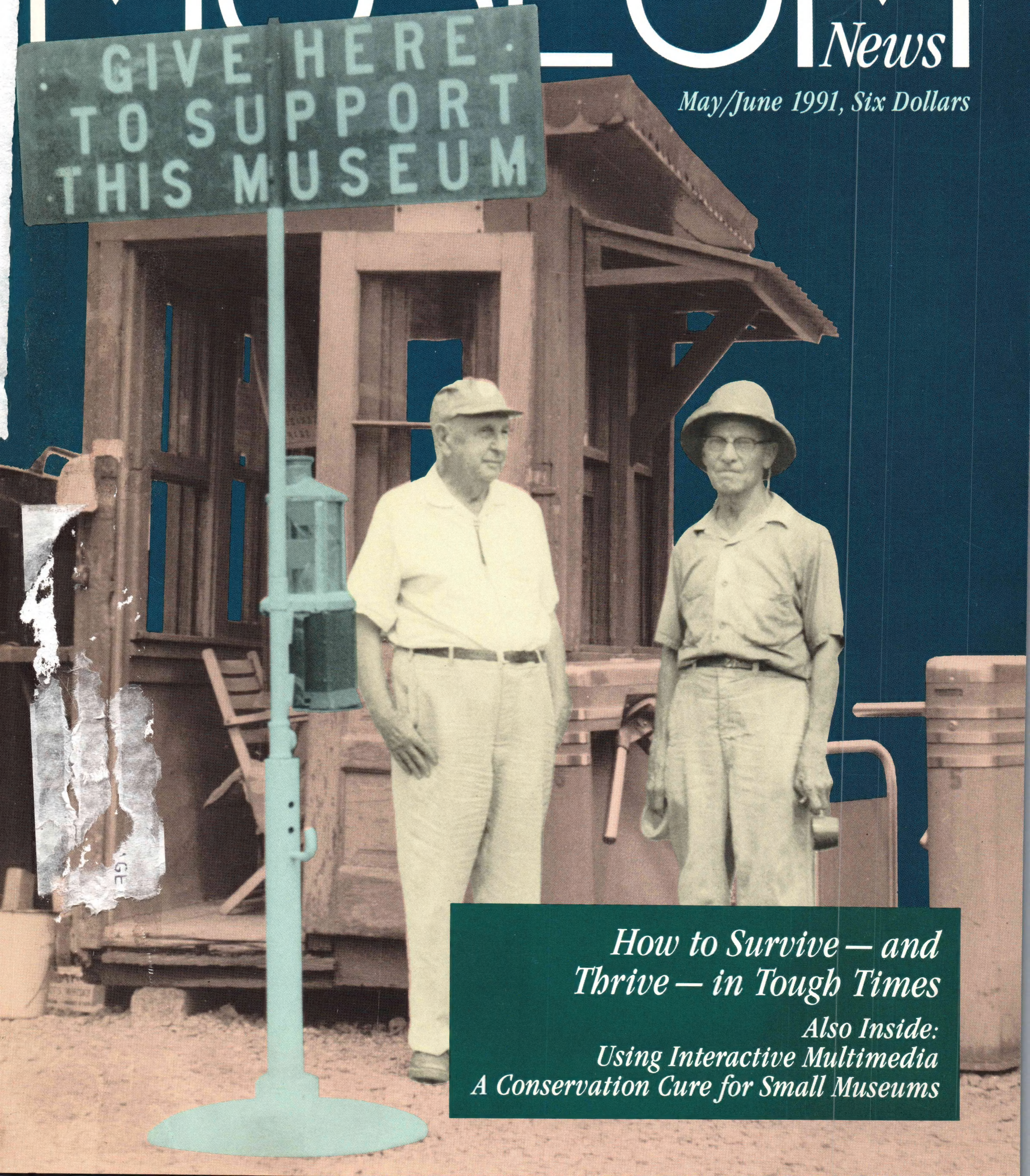
MUSEUM News

May/June 1991, Six Dollars



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NOTEWORTHY

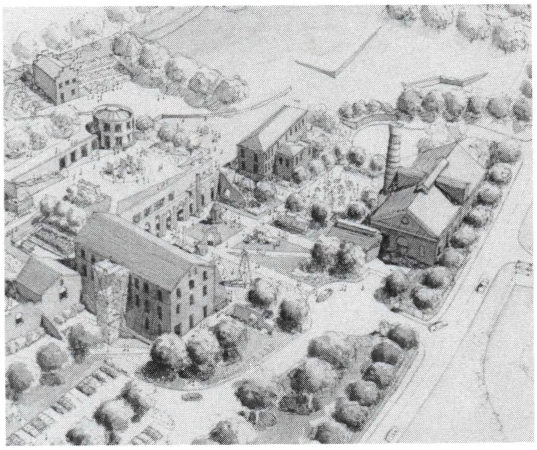
Red Mountain Museum and **Discovery Place** in Birmingham, Ala., have merged and will move to the landmark Loveman's Building in the downtown area.

John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago and Western Illinois University have developed college-credit courses in aquatic studies. Marine Mammology, the first, will allow students in the Midwest to benefit from direct observation of sea mammals.

New-York Historical Society and **Jewish Museum** in New York have embarked on an unusual collaborative venture. While the Jewish Museum is undergoing expansion and renovation, it will become the museum-in-residence at the historical society. The two will share exhibition space, but each will offer its own education and public programs.

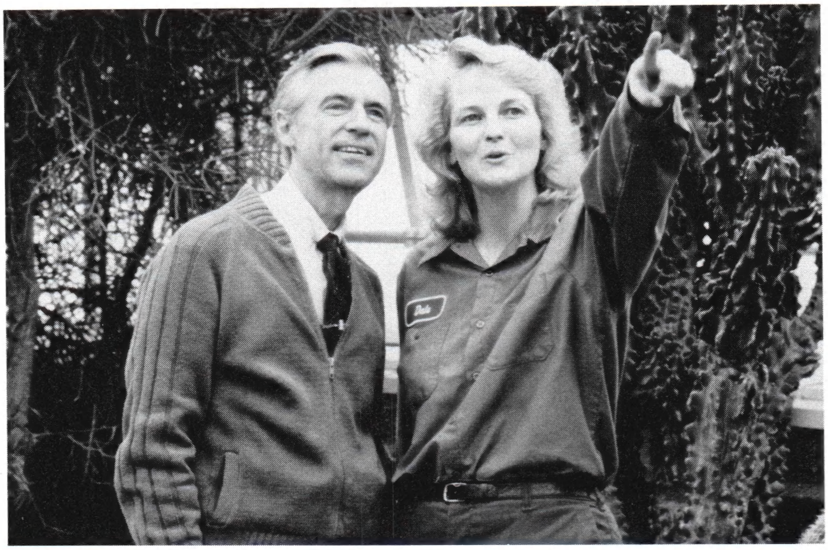
SciTrek Science and Technology Museum of Atlanta has opened its facilities to groups that want to spend the night at the museum. The program includes a workshop, a live science demonstration, a video program, and access to the exhibit floor, which includes more than 100 interactive exhibits. The new program accommodates organized groups of at least 10 children.

Valentine Museum in Richmond, Va., has unveiled plans for a $22.5 million history museum, to be called Valentine Riverside, at the 19th-century Tredegar Iron Works site in downtown Richmond. The Ethyl Corp. has made an $8 million challenge commitment to the project; the Valentine also has received a $750,000 matching challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a $1.2 million grant from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation.



Valentine Museum

Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh recently hosted a visit by public television's Mr. Rogers and Mr. McFeely (the speedy delivery man in *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood).* The visit is one episode in a week of programs that explore the topic of growing and will become part of the show's library.



Phipps Conservatory

Santa Cruz County Historical Trust, Santa Cruz City Museum, and **Vision Santa Cruz** opened the storefront exhibit *The Changing Face of Downtown Santa Cruz* on the first anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake. The exhibit examines the community's history of crises, including floods and earthquakes, and then focuses on the future of the downtown.

Smithsonian Institution has opened an experimental gallery. The gallery allows experimentation with different presentation styles, many of which encourage visitor participation. The 7,000-square-foot gallery serves as a laboratory for museum professionals who want to explore issues related to exhibition development, context and design, marketing, and accessibility.

Adler Planetarium in Chicago unveiled its renovations in mid-February. The highlight of the construction project is the escalator linking the main-level Universe Theater to the upper-level Sky Theater. As visitors ride the escalator, they are surrounded by thousands of twinkling stars and galaxies. Thanks to mirrors and fiber optics, a three-dimensional effect is created. □

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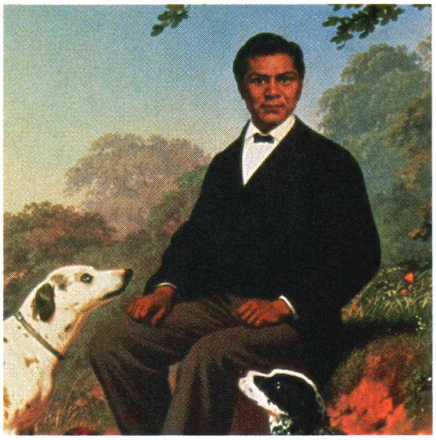

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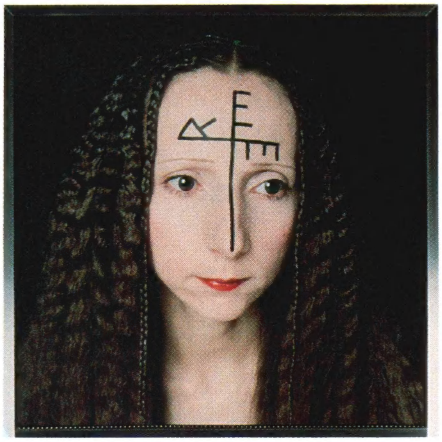

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On the cover: A vintage photograph from the National Museum of Transport captures the essence of museum dependence on public support. *Photograph by B. Everett Owings, courtesy National Museum of Transport/Transport Museum Association, St. Louis.*

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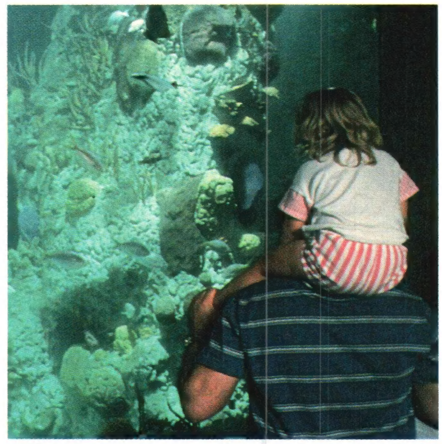

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Customer Satisfaction

To the Editor:

I disagree that only museums with annual attendance as high as 250,000 can have successful food service programs (see *Add Meals to the Menu of Options You Offer Visitors*, November/December 1990). At Heritage Park in Santa Fe Springs, we found a way to create a successful food-service program with an annual attendance of 84,000 per year as a customer base.

We contract for this service with a small, reputable sandwich shop. We offer a year of rent-free space to the concessionaire; assistance with graphics and mailings; promotion; and first right of refusal for any catered event.

Our organization views the service as a visitor amenity as important as clean bathrooms.

Instead of looking at food service as an instant income source, museums might look at food service as another way to foster long-term visitor loyalty and satisfaction. Consequently, a small museum might find that a modest investment in the service for the first few years will pay dividends in the future.

Margaret Hammon
Cultural Services Supervisor
Heritage Park
Santa Fe Springs, Calif.

The Truth About Tutankhamun

To the Editor:

Regarding *Team Players* in the March/April issue: The physical and interpretive presentation of the Tutankhamun installation was developed by the National Gallery of Art's design team (Gaillard Ravenel, George Sexton, with Mark Leithauser), working with curator Christine Lilyquist of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and educator Bill Williams of the National Gallery. Theirs is the installation concept depicted in the photographs illustrating the article, and the photograph on page 45 was taken at the gallery.

In fairness to the creative talents involved, the National Gallery's designers should have been mentioned and the location of the photogrpah identified. For better of worse, the design intelligence of Ravenel and his associates has transformed the standard of exhibition installation in art museums.

Kent Lydecker
Deputy Director for Education
Metropolitan Museum of Art
New York

Community as Curator

To the Editor:

I was pleased to see *Presence of Absence: New Installations,* an exhibition organized and circulated by Independent Curators, Inc., in *Museum News* (see *A Hands-On Art Show Lets the Community Double as Curator,* January/February). The accompanying photograph shows community volunteers examining a work of art they had assembled. Unfortunately, the piece itself was not credited. It is *Rear View Mirror,* 1986, by David Ireland.

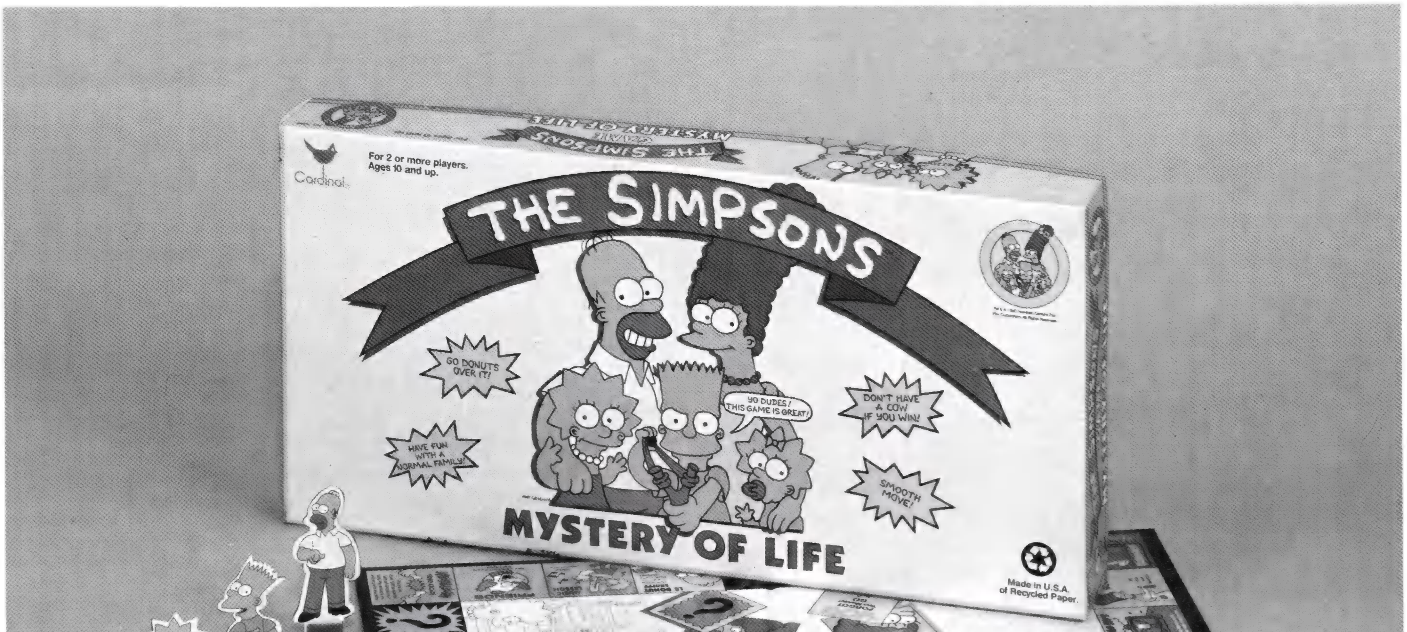
Susan Sollins
Executive Director
Independent Curators, Inc.
New York

M Notes

A Museum Makes Room for Daddy—And the Rest of the Simpsons, Too

Before history takes its traditional toll on the artifacts generated by contemporary commercial culture, some museums purchase items while they still are being made and sold. The American Museum of the Moving Image in Astoria, N.Y., is one such institution. As part of its mission to collect materials dependent on and associated with film and television broadcasting, the museum has undertaken an extensive collecting campaign of Simpsoniana—that is, items licensed by Twentieth Century Fox, producer of the popular, animated half-hour program that redefines television's slant on the nuclear family of the 1990s.

As of October 1990, no fewer than 160 companies have received licenses to manufacture Simpsons-related items, from the predictable dolls and T-shirts to barbecue sets and life vests. According to Sharon Blume, deputy director for programs at the museum, the Simpsons licensing campaign differs only slightly from earlier media-related merchandizing efforts in that items are pitched to



One Simpsons product donated to the American Museum of the Moving Image is a board game made by Cardinal Industries of Long Island, N.Y.

both adult and child audiences.

Although some in the museum profession may be shocked that a sister institution is accessioning such material, the acquisition of Simpsons artifacts conforms to one part of the museum's mission: to collect promotional materials such as press books, posters, and fan magazines. Blume remarks on the venerable antecedents of using film as a basis for merchandizing: "It goes back to the [1920s and earlier], when companies were making spoons with movie-star images on them." Licensing as we know it today is a product of the 1930s, at which time Walt Disney played such an enormous role.

Absent a curator specializing in promotional artifacts, Blume and the museum's director, Rochelle Slovin, have relied on occasional donations by collectors and purchases at flea markets. For the huge licensing campaigns of yesteryear—notably Howdy Doody and Hopalong Cassidy—items are hard to find either because collectors of this type of material do not think of giving them to museums, surviving examples are in poor physical condition, or their prices are in the stratosphere.

The choice of the Simpsons as the candidate for a comprehensive licensing-campaign collection is based on a hunch. Blume talked with manufacturers last year who said the fad would last about a year. (The bulk of the Simpsons-related items appeared on store shelves in the pre-Christmas season.) At a licensing convention in New York City, she was struck by the overall high quality of the Simpsons line of products. She notes that items to be acquired need fulfill not only criteria of historical significance (which in the case of contemporary collecting is no sure thing anyway), they also have to possess aesthetic merit and not be conservation nightmares. Blume speculates that the unusual quality control exercised by Twentieth Century Fox and Simpsons-creator Matt Groening contributed to the high standards she saw.

From a list of all those companies possessing licenses to produce Simpsons products, Blume wrote asking for donation of one each for the museum's collection. Items have been streaming in ever since. Despite snickers from staff members when the boxes arrive, items are accessioned and handled with the museological respect due any museum artifact. Asked whether plans for research and display have been formulated for the objects, Blume says they probably will be stored for future historians, who are likely to be better judges of their significance. She compares her activity to putting items in the attic for subsequent generations to uncover. Moreover, visitor confusion may result from seeing the same items both in the museum shop (which sells a variety of film and video-related products) and the display cases of the collection.

The wisdom of Blume's decision to acquire Simpsons material now, rather than when it acquires the patina of historical validation, became clear in the search for a color illustration. In contacting one toy manufacturer, the museum learned that the company already had decided to stop production because the market had softened. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

After Its Tour Concludes, This Art Collection Seeks a Permanent Home

Wanted: caring home for more than 400 works of contemporary Native American art. Highest quality beaded necklaces, war bonnets, baskets, kachina dolls, and weavings. Price: free. New owner must pay for transportation.

This fictitious advertisement is not far from the truth. The American Federation of Arts (A.F.A.), based in New York, spent several years buying Native American artworks made between 1965 and 1985 for a traveling exhibition. The exhibition has finished its nine-venue tour, and now A.F.A. is seeking a permanent home for the collection.

A.F.A. is accepting applications for the collection through September 16. Institutions that might be interested in housing the collection, A.F.A. officials say, must have a demonstrated interest in Native American art, including a willingness and capability to continue to collect such art. According to an A.F.A. statement, "It is the A.F.A.'s intention that this collection remain in-

This Navajo pictorial weaving is from a collection of Native American art that has no permanent home. An exhibition of the art visited nine cities; parts also will tour Australia and New Zealand.

tact and that some part of the collection be on display at all times."

What the new owner will get is more than 400 works by Indian artists from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Among other items, the collection includes a Northern Cheyenne war bonnet, a Kwagiutl mask from British Columbia, a Southern Arapahoe tooled leather box, a Cherokee "coffin" basket, a Zuni Shalako kachina, and a Pueblo six-strand necklace.

A.F.A. began collecting the items in 1977, purchasing them from the artists with a grant from the American Can Co. Foundation (now called Primerica). Ralph T. Coe, an authority on contemporary Native American art, assembled the collection and wrote the accompanying catalogue.

The traveling exhibition visited nine cities: New York; Portland, Ore.; St. Paul, Minn.; Anchorage, Alaska; Washington, D.C.; Albuquerque, N.M.; Los Angeles; Rochester, N.Y.; and Columbus, Ga. It ended in 1989, although part of the collection will tour Australia and New Zealand from 1992 to 1995. (The museum that gets the collection must be willing to accept the donation in two parts: half in January or February 1992 and the remainder when it returns from Australia and New Zealand.) The collection currently is in storage.

A selection decision is expected by December 31. A detailed list of criteria for museums wishing to be considered is available from A.F.A., 41 E. 65th St., New York 10021; (212) 988–7700; FAX (212) 861-2487.

Condensing 4,000 Journals Into One Comprehensive Art Bibliography

Museum curators who consult the recently introduced *Bibliography of the History of Art* will sleep more soundly knowing how slim the likelihood is that their research overlooked a vital reference in some obscure and unavailable periodical. The publication merges two independent bibliographical enterprises: the Répertoire d'art et d'archéologie (R.A.A.), which has operated for 80 years, and the Répertoire international de la literature de l'art (R.I.L.A.), a more recent entry into the art bibliographical arena.

The decision to combine the two brings together two very different types of institutions: in France, the Institut National d'Information Scientifique et Technique, a national agency and part of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; and in the U.S., the Getty Art History Information Program, an entity of the J. Paul Getty Trust devoted to developing modern information technology to serve art historical research. Five years ago, representatives of each organization agreed to take steps to eliminate the duplication of effort involved in the simultaneous publication of R.A.A. and R.I.L.A. and at the same time expand the comprehensiveness of the materials captured in the bibliography.

The initial goal was to include 23,000 records, with each institution providing an equal share, half in French and half in English. The scope of the new *Bibliography of the History of Art* limits itself to post-Classical Western art and other arts that are traditionally studied in relation to it—such as migration, Viking, and colonial art. Excluded are areas such as Islamic art, Asian art, African art, and pre-Columbian art. The chronological reach extends from the fourth century A.D. to the present. (Since 1945, selection coverage is worldwide.)

Of particular interest to U.S. museum curators: The range of media represented includes more than the traditional fine arts—that is, painting, sculpture, architecture, and graphic arts. Decorative and applied arts, folk art, and other examples of material culture also are included. Although film as a dramatic art does not appear, photography and all new contemporary forms of media do.

The creators of the bibliography pride themselves on its interdisciplinary nature, with abstracts compiled from approximately 4,000 journals, which includes significant coverage of Latin American, Eastern European, and Scandinavian publications. Among the nonperiodical literature referenced are monographs, conference proceedings, Festschriften, and (notably) exhibition and art dealers' catalogues. Excluded are newspapers, annual reports, auction sale catalogues, and films. The bilingual bibliography will be published quarterly and contain subject indexes and a yearly cumulative index.

Like its predecessors, the bibliography will be available on-line. In the U.S., it will form part of DIALOG, which contains a variety of databases including literature, psychology, religion, history, linguistics, philosophy, and music and is available in many large museums and public libraries.

Annual subscription to *Bibliography*

of the History of Art has been set at $325. It is available through the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., Williamstown, Mass. 01267; (413) 458-8260. For on-line access to the bibliography and the entire R.I.L.A. database from 1975 through 1989, contact DIALOG, (800) 334-2564.

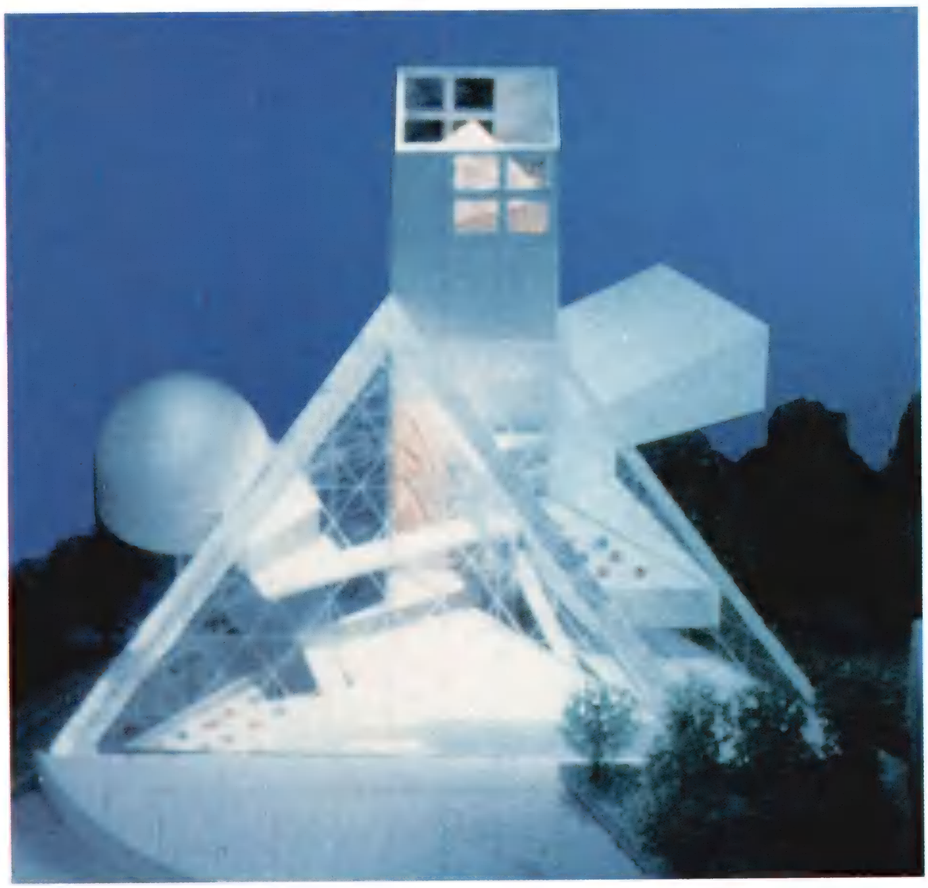
Despite a Rocky Beginning, This Museum Continues to Roll Forward

Despite delays and a slow start in fund raising, organizers of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum are optimistic that ground for the new institution finally will be broken in Cleveland this fall.

The proposal for a shrine to what some considered (and may still consider) the devil's music was unveiled in 1985 by Jann Wenner, publisher of *Rolling Stone* magazine, and Ahmet Ertegun, founder and chairman of Atlantic Records—two of the most influential men in the contemporary music industry. Cleveland was selected as the museum's site a year later because of its historical significance (local disk jockey Alan Freed is credited with coining the phrase "rock 'n' roll" in 1951—and because of the groundswell of local support for the institution. More than 650,000 people signed a petition supporting Cleveland as the museum's home.

Since 1986, the organizers have raised $44 million toward a goal of $60 million to build a 120,000-square-foot, glass, pyramid-shaped structure designed by I.M Pei that will sit on the shore of Lake Erie in the city's downtown, according to Director Larry R. Thompson.

When the museum opens—Thompson says in late 1993 or early 1994—visitors will find what the organizers call a living museum, made up of interactive exhibits and a state-of-the-art sound system, as well as rock memorabilia. The museum will have its own radio studio, permitting radio personalities to broadcast live. Thompson says the museum also plans an exten-



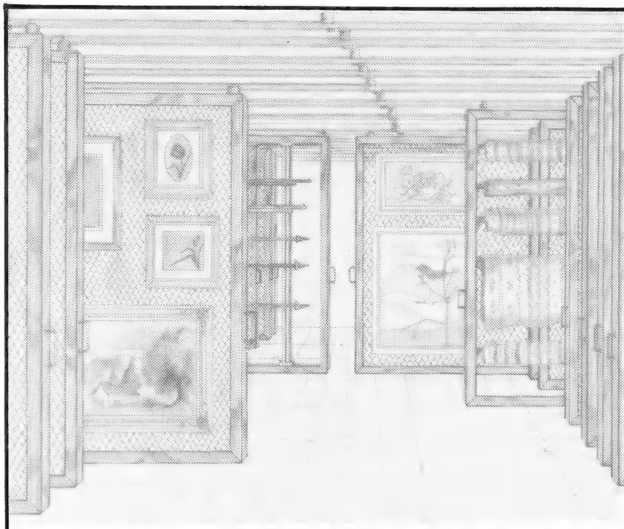
Groundbreaking for Cleveland's long-awaited Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, designed by I.M. Pei, is scheduled for the fall. Previously announced starting dates have come and gone.

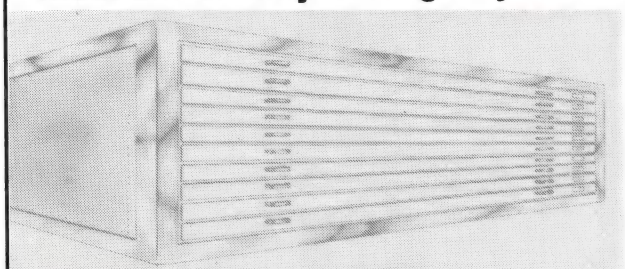
sive archive to permit scholars to research the history and development of rock music. The museum currently has no collection beyond a few items such as the original sheet of lyrics of the psychedelic anthem "Purple Haze" by guitarist Jimi Hendrix, recently purchased at auction. Thompson says collecting will begin in earnest when the museum hires a director of curatorial and educational affairs.

So far, 84 people have been inducted into the hall of fame, most of them rock stars—such as Chuck Berry, James Brown, Elvis Presley, the Beatles, the Who, and Bob Dylan. But inductees also include "early influences" (such as Woody Guthrie and the Ink Spots) and nonperformers (such as Freed, producer Sam Phillips, the songwriting team of Jerome Lieber and Michael Stoller, and museum cofounder Ertegun, who is cochairman of the museum's board).

The museum has a staff of four and a 24-person board, half representing the music industry and the other half the Cleveland area. But there is, so far, no curatorial staff and no building, and that has prompted snickers from people in the music industry who wonder when the hall of fame actually will materialize. Rock star Mick Jagger once called the museum the "Phantom Temple of Rock." *Spin* magazine, a *Rolling Stone* rival, denounced the museum as the "Rock Hall of Shame." Wenner has been quoted as saying in early 1990 that construction would begin before that year was out.

The delay stems from changes in the proposed building site and the interior design team and a slow start to fund raising. The museum originally was set for construction at Cleveland's Tower City hotel and retail development on a parcel of land donated in 1987. But the museum organizers subsequently ruled the site too small for future expansion (parking also was limited) and began looking for another site in 1990, soon selecting the lakeshore site near the heart of downtown Cleveland. Meanwhile, the museum's board was dissatisfied with the work of its interior design team and commissioned another. The delays have increased the estimated cost of the project, from $15 million to "at





least $48 million," according to a fact sheet released by the museum.

Thompson says organizers first sought local grass-roots support for the museum. "There was a lot of support, but not much money," he says. One of Thompson's first assignments was to revamp the development plan and conduct an aggressive capital campaign.

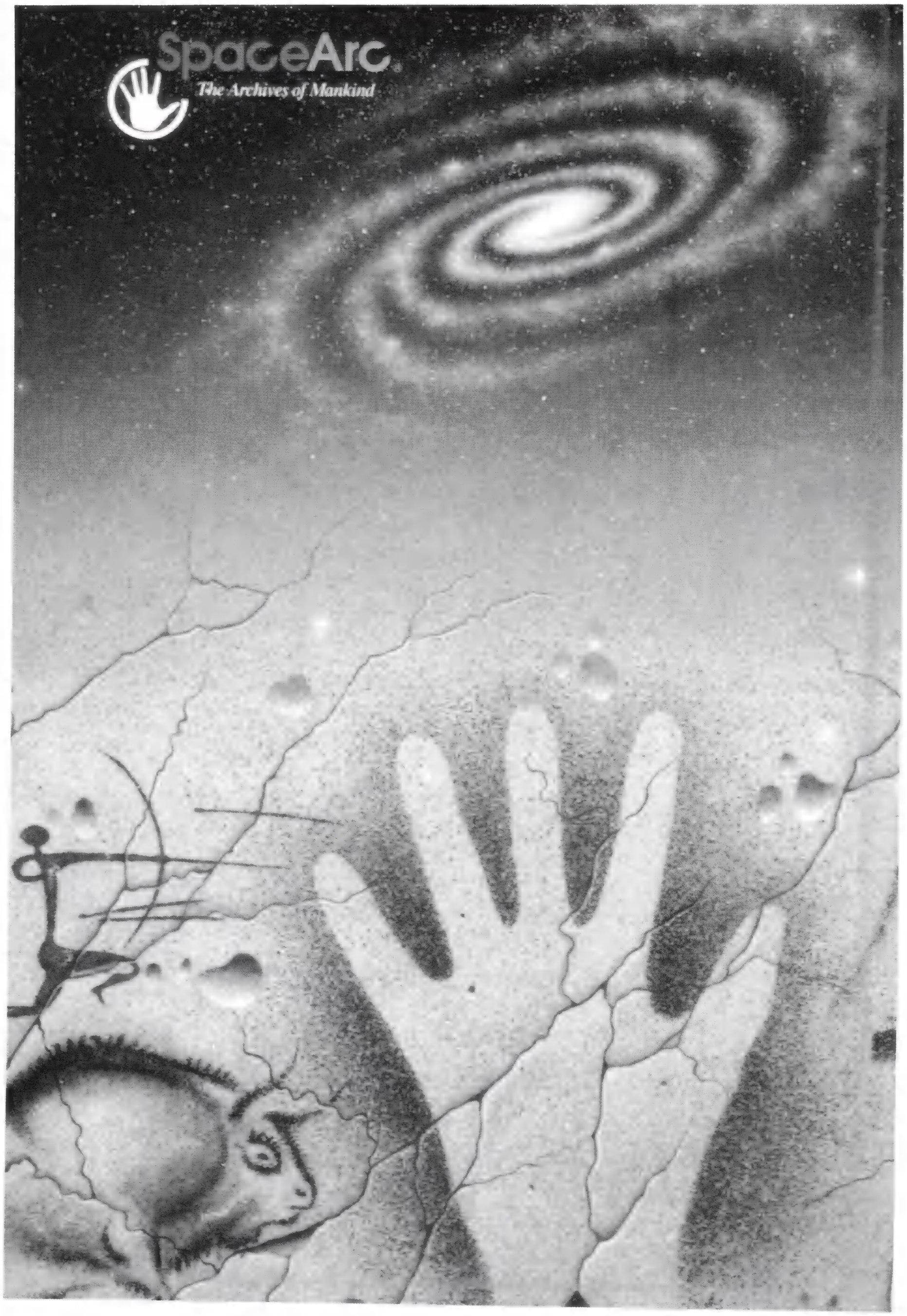
Thompson, a lawyer who previously served as a special assistant to the president of Ohio State University, concedes that the museum "had some difficult periods in the beginning," but he says the complaints about the delays stem from "impatience to have the hall of fame built." He adds that similar projects have taken years to get off the ground: The John F. Kennedy Library in Boston (also designed by Pei) took 10 years to complete.

What to Put In a Space Archive? How About 15 Million Messages

In conjunction with the Quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's voyage of exploration and the designation of 1992 as International Space Year (which is designed to encourage global cooperation in space), the Rochester Museum and Science Center in Rochester, N.Y., has developed an unusual opportunity for people all over the world to inscribe their thoughts in a space archive due to be launched into solar orbit in 1992.

A four-pound canister will contain 15 million messages from Earth. A standardized, one-page archival form has room for name, address, a photograph, and space for writing and artwork. The Educational Testing Service in Princeton, N.J., receives the completed forms, scans them electronically, converting them into computerized data. A duplicate set of messages will be accessible by computer at a series of earth stations, of which the Rochester museum is the first. The idea is to have networks of such places, possibly located in science and technology centers or other museums with computer-based imaging systems available to query the archive.

Contributors to SpaceArc, as the archive is called, will be able to share their current thoughts and appearance



The logo of SpaceArc, an orbiting time capsule and archive planned for 1992, evokes humankind's earliest visual record of itself. Museums will provide access to the archive.

with their grandchildren 50 years from now. At the same time, they can find out what people in other countries chose to say to future readers of the archive. Although the initial impetus involved schoolchildren, with an intended goal of stimulating global awareness and an interest in science and technology, the general public will be able to participate in the program starting next fall. A processing fee of $2.50 per archival form covers handling and the cost of scanning and storage.

So far, approximately 20,000 children and adults have submitted forms. Their comments range from poems directed to deceased loved ones to essays on world events to thoughts on growing up in an inner-city neighborhood—as well as hopes for and predictions of the future.

In addition to being an official project of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, SpaceArc enjoys the participation of the National Aeronautics and Space

Administration Division of Educational Affairs, Space Systems/Loral (formerly Ford Aerospace, Space Systems Division), the World Space Foundation, the Educational Testing Service, and the U.S. International Space Year Association. The project has received the plaudits and support of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

If museums are interested in adding their thoughts to the space time-capsule and terrestrial archive, forms are available from the Rochester Museum and Science Center, 657 East Ave., Box 1480, Rochester, N.Y. 14603-1480; (716) 271-4320. The museum also welcomes queries from other institutions interested in becoming earth stations for the archive.

This Program of Subsidized Exhibit Fees Aims to Aid Small Museums

For small to mid-size museums and university galleries across the U.S., hosting traveling exhibitions can pose a financial burden. But a new program from the American Federation of Arts (A.F.A.) assists these institutions by supplementing the costs of exhibition development and implementation.

Art Access, which subsidizes participation fees for member institutions, was launched as a pilot project in 1989 with help from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. As a result of the successful experiment, the program recently received a four-year extension and $1 million grant from the fund.

Subsidies to selected institutions are based on A.F.A. membership categories—that is, institutions are segregated by size of annual operating budget. Those with the smallest budgets receive the most. The percentage of fee reduction is 35 percent for museums with an annual operating budgets of $500,000 or less; 25 percent for museums with budgets of between $500,000 and $1 million; 20 percent for institutions with budgets of between $1 million and $2.5 million; and 10 percent for those with budgets greater than $2.5 million.

Each year, five or six exhibitions of American art—chosen by A.F.A. on the basis of high quality and potential for national impact—are selected for inclusion in the program. Originally consisting only of 20th-century American art, the exhibitions now include American art of earlier periods.

By making the exhibitions accessible to small museums, the program hopes to increase its public reach while heightening the public's interest in and awareness of American art.

Art Access exhibitions currently on tour include *Abstract Sculpture in America, 1930–1970; American Studio Ceramics: 1920–1950; Of Time and the City: American Modernism from the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery; Sounding the Depths: 150 Years of American Seascape;* and *American Originals: Selections from Reynolda House, Museum of American Art.*

Some exhibitions also include educational programming designed to involve audiences in the analysis and interpretation of the artwork. The pilot project, for example—*Larry Rivers:*

Public and Private, mounted in fall 1990—included an educational package developed by A.F.A., educational staff members of various art institutions, an arts and culture education consultant, high school art students, and artist Larry Rivers. The texts included illustrations, discussions of the artists' works, resource guides, and a glossary. Questions included in the package encourage participants to absorb and reflect on their individual experiences.

For more information about Art Access, contact A.F.A., 41 E. 65 St., New York 10021; (212) 988-7700; FAX (212) 861-2487.

Here's Some of What You Have to Look Forward To

The economic downturn has not dampened museum plans for exhibitions. Some of those now in the development (and later) stages come to *Museum News* readers from Zachary P. Morfogen, arts newsletter publisher and consultant:

- The High Museum of Art in Atlanta has organized *Max Weber: The Cubist Years* for a November debut and a national tour to Houston; Washington, D.C.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Brooklyn, N.Y.; and Los Angeles.
- Scheduled for a national tour in 1993–94, the exhibition *Question of Modernity: American Sculpture Comes of Age* is being organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
- In the development stage is an international tour for 1992 of 75 watercolors by Great Britain's Prince Charles, with stops in the U.S.
- The San Diego Museum of Art is planning a mid-1990s tour of items found in the tomb of Chinese emperor Duke Zeng located in Suixian and dating to 433 B.C.
- An American tour beginning in mid-1992 of *Victoria and Albert Museum Masterpieces* features western paintings from 1480–1880, including works from the Duke of Wellington's collection at Apsley House.
- The Whitney Museum of American Art is organizing an exhibit of Mary Cassatt paintings for 1992, which will include the "mother and child" paintings. NYNEX is the sponsor. □

PEOPLE

Miguel Angel Corzo to director, Getty Conservation Institute, Los Angeles.

Catherine Hoover Voorsanger to assistant curator of American decorative arts, and **Lorraine Wolfangel-Hall** to education systems coordinator, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Maria A. Holperin to executive director, Museum of Ozarks' History, Springfield, Mo.

Mark Stevenson to assistant conservator of prints, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City.

Melinda Young Frye to associate curator, and **Melinda K. Smith** to registrarial assistant, Commission on Art, United States Senate, Washington, D.C.

Ellen Macdonald to director of development, and **Barbara Caldwell** to director of public relations, Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Douglas Reid Cosby to program manager, Higgins Armory Museum, Worcester, Mass.

William McLean Sudduth to president and chief executive officer, Southwest Museum of Science and Technology, Dallas.

Jean M. Martin to director/curator, Stanley-Whitman House Museum, Farmington, Conn.

Lucinda S. Bray to exhibition programs manager, and **Laura Gorman** to senior conservator, Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee.

Gregory W. Welch to director of exhibits, Computer Museum, Boston.

Bonnie J. Krause to director, University Museums, University of Mississippi, University, Miss.

David Anthony Ross to director, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Allyson McCauley to environmental educator, Nature Science Center, Winston-Salem, N.C.

Joseph Hines to curator of exhibits, Anniston Museum of Natural History, Anniston, Ala.

Nick Capasso to assistant curator, DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, Mass.

Patti Leach to director, Campbell Historical Museum, Campbell, Calif.

Judith Sobol to director, Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mark Tullos to executive director, Walter Anderson Museum of Art, Ocean Springs, Miss.

Gloria Jaramillo to deputy director, and **Holly Barnet-Sanchez** to curator of exhibitions, Mexican Museum, San Francisco.

Daryl Webb to curator of exhibits, Dacotah Prairie Museum, Aberdeen, S.D.

Maggie Forbes to executive director, **Chuck E. Gray** to director of exhibits, and **David A. Adair** to public relations director, Pittsburgh Children's Museum, Pittsburgh.

Mitchell Grubler to executive director, Alice Austen House Museum and Garden, Staten Island, N.Y.

Beverly A. Foster to public relations officer, and **M. Christopher Beckham** to development officer, Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.

Ellen Lay Donovan to executive director, and **Wendy Prentice Chamberlain** to communications director, South Florida Science Museum, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Roger D. Clisby to director of curatorial affairs, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Ohio.

Kenneth J. Roberts to development associate, Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Mass.

Milton J. Bloch to chief executive, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y.

Stephen Fleischman to director, Madison Art Center, Madison, Wis.

Michael B. Husband to director, Arizona Historical Society, Central Arizona Division, Phoenix.

John H. Wilson III to curator of paintings and sculpture, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati.

Carmen T. Ruiz-Fischler to director, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico.

Mickie McCormic to director, Irish American Heritage Museum, East Durham, N.Y. □

Please send personnel information to Nina G. Taylor, Editorial Assistant, Museum News, *AAM, 1225 Eye St. N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005.*

Museums Begin to Assess the Fallout from the Gulf War

The museum world's worst fears have come to pass: Iraqi forces pillaged the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah—the Museum of Islamic Art in Kuwait City—carting off much of its priceless collection to Baghdad. In addition, Iraqi soldiers set fire to other portions of the National Museum, of which the Museum of Islamic Art is a part, and plundered Kuwait City's zoo, killing dozens of animals and even using some for target practice.

Conflicting reports make it unclear whether Iraq's National Museum was damaged during the war.

Kuwait City was left in virtual ruins by Iraqi soldiers, who had occupied the city from August 2, 1990, to the end of February. The city's cultural institutions were not immune to the wholesale destruction.

According to a report in *The Washington Post,* Iraqi forces ransacked the Museum of Islamic Art. Display cases were emptied. Many had their glass panels smashed. The *Post* reported that several of the museum's galleries "were little more than blackened shells after having been burned by the invaders."

Ancient coins, ceremonial daggers, old copies of the Koran, and other objects dating from the earliest days of Islam are believed to be have been destroyed or stolen and taken to Baghdad. The museum had contained 1,500 objects and 20,000 coins. Part of the collection was in the U.S. on tour when Iraq invaded Kuwait and escaped the plundering. (See *Aggression in the Gulf Casts Doubt on the Fate of Kuwaiti Art,* January/ February.)

An employee in the cultural office of the Kuwaiti embassy in Washington, D.C., said she had no information on the status of the National Museum, but added that there had been reports of Iraqi soldiers emptying it of many of its objects and using the museum as a bunker. Correspondent Robert Fisk reported in British Columbia's *Vancouver Sun* of the "smoking embers of the National Museum, burned by the Iraqis" just before they fled Kuwait City.

News reports from Baghdad in early March held out the hope that the stolen objects would be repatriated. Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz said in a letter to United Nations Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar that Iraq would return all objects taken

from Kuwaiti museums. And as *Museum News* went to press, there was a report from Baghdad that the Museum of Islamic Art's collection was safe and in the custody of Iraq's top archaeologists. State-owned Baghdad radio reportedly announced that the collection would be returned to Kuwait.

What Iraq can't return are the animals its forces killed during their plunder of the Kuwait City zoo. According to the *Post* and CBS News, Iraqi soldiers shot some animals and carted off others, including giraffes, elephants, and monkeys, to the Baghdad zoo, or to eat when their own food supplies dwindled.

CBS News correspondent Eric Engberg reported March 5: "For no particular reason, one Iraqi soldier shot the zoo's elephant. The bullet is still lodged in the great beast's shoulder. On another day, an Iraqi general used a monkey for target practice. Dozens of other animals were killed."

The zoo's workers apparently were forced to leave their jobs, the animals left to fend for themselves. *Post* reporter William Branigin witnessed two Bengal tigers and five lions eating putrid goat meat and "unrecognizable decomposed carcasses in bone-filled cages that apparently had not been cleaned in six months."

But there was a glimmer of hope and heroism amid the ghastly scene. Engberg reported that some Kuwaitis carried birds and small mammals to their homes to care for. And two brothers appointed themselves caretakers of the zoo, sneaking into the facility to feed and clean the remaining animals as best they could.

In Iraq, meanwhile, there were unconfirmed reports that the National Museum in Baghdad, whose collection of Mesopotamian antiquities is perhaps the world's most extensive, and several archaeological sites were damaged in bombing by allied forces led by the U.S. But unlike Kuwait, where news reporters are relatively unencumbered, Iraq has subjected reporters to heavy government censorship, and foreign reporters were ordered out of the country in early March. Experts in the U.S. say they just don't know whether to believe the sketchy reports they have seen in the press.

For instance, the Associated Press reported in February that the director-general of Iraq's Archaeology and History Department had told a government newspaper that the National Museum's collection had suffered serious damage from allied bombing, although he said many items had been moved to basement vaults for safekeeping before the war began. The director-general, Mu'aid Saeed, also was reported to have said allied bombing had extensively damaged historic monuments and archaeological sites.

Robert McC. Adams, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and an expert on ancient Mesopotamian water systems, told *Museum News* that there was no way of judging the accuracy of the reports from Iraq. Some of the reports, he said, could have been "disinformation" concocted by the Iraqi government. Adams cited one Western correspondent who said she had passed the National Museum and had seen no physical damage. Adams al-

lowed that the heavy vibration from the bombing of a telecommunications center nearby could have caused some damage to the museum's most delicate objects.

McGuire Gibson, an archaeologist at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, who has visited the National Museum often, told *Museum News* that he feared for the museum's safety because it was so close to several military targets—namely the telecommunications center, a railroad station, two bridges, and the Ministry of Justice. Gibson said the Iraqi government built basement storage vaults for the museum's collection during the eight-year Iraq/Iran war, and he had heard that before the latest war began on January 16, museum staff members began moving part of the collection to the vaults. Still, he said, some of the most fragile items, such as the Ur harp and ancient Summarian ostrich egg shells, would have been vulnerable to vibration, and large pieces, such as the Assyrian tablets (which weigh somewhere between one and two tons) could not be moved.

Gibson joined Adams and seven other museum professionals and academics in a letter in January to *The New York Times* warning of possible damage to museums and archaeological sites in Iraq. Adams told *Museum News* that April Glaspie, U.S. ambassador to Iraq just before Iraq invaded Kuwait, heard about the letter, asked for a copy, and passed it along to President Bush's national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft. The letter precipitated action by Defense Department intelligence in identifying historical and cultural sites that bombers should avoid. Adams said he was asked to review the Pentagon's list and "red line" the most important sites. He said he made "numerous corrections."

Although pleased that the government was taking action in protecting the sites, Adams also expressed disappointment that the government took so long in doing so. He noted that the Pentagon approached him more than a month after the allied forces had launched their massive bombing runs. "I wish there had been more timely preparations," Adams said.—*Evan Roth*

Chipping Away at the Veneer of 'Manifest Destiny'

The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820–1920

The conquest of the American West produced a rich visual legacy that has largely remained unexplored as a coherent body of work. Scholarly interest among historians and art historians has gravitated in the past toward two positions, each of which does little justice to the full complement of meaning embedded in the landscapes and historical pictures of the westward expansion across the American continent: Either the images, owing to their plausible naturalism, are taken at face value as faithful documents of places, people, and events, or they are eviscerated by the formalist art-historical enterprise, where only such shining lights as Bierstadt and Bingham merit consideration and where artworks are judged in terms of artistic influence and set in relation to East Coast aesthetic developments.

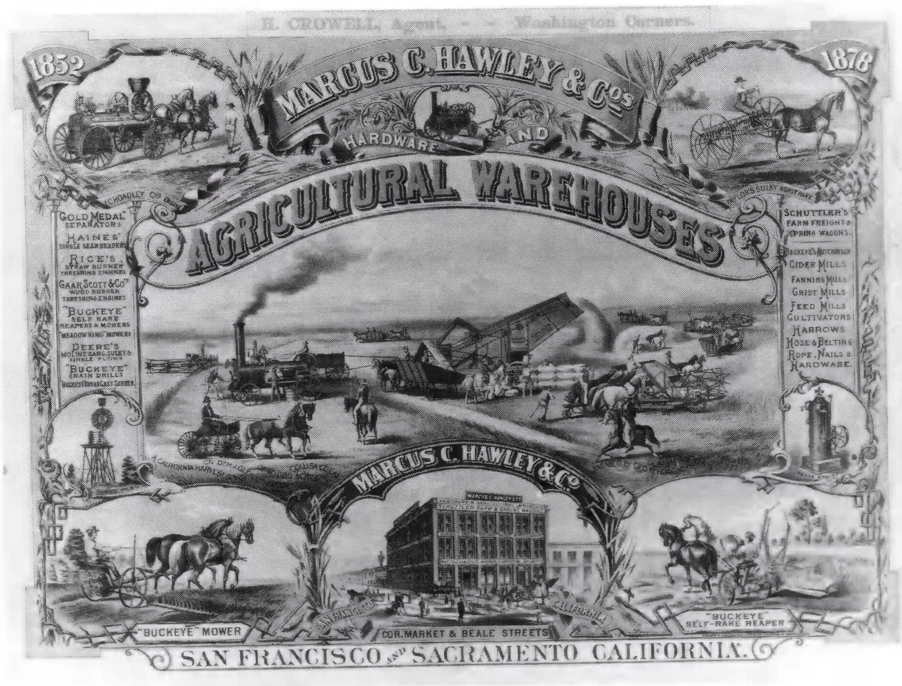
According to William Truettner, curator of painting and sculpture at the National Museum of American Art and organizer of this exhibition, *The West as America* took its lead from historians who have looked at the literary texts supporting and recording the westward expansion of the 19th century. Taking the works of the exhibition as visual texts, Truettner and Alex Nemerov, a Smithsonian Institution fellow and exhibition collaborator, assigned original ideological import and stripped away layers of unproblematic naturalness to reveal aesthetic strategies deployed by the artists in the overarching enterprise of expansion toward the Pacific. Seen in this light, Truettner notes that "western scenes offered a visual promise of a better and new land and had a subtle rhetorical appeal to Easterners" who either were expansionists or potential recruits seduced by images of wealth, stability, and Edenic majesty.

This overtly didactic show sets about to demystify the role the visual arts played in one important chapter in the larger course of American history by dividing the material into six categories. The first, "Prelude to Expansion: Repainting the Past," examines the way in which contrived historical scenes put a positive gloss on expansionist activity by rendering it as the inevitable continuation of Columbus's "discovery" and the subsequent Colonial experience.

A second section centers of the notion of "progress" and the part it played in the course of conquest and nation building. Heroic images of scouts and pioneers countered reports of harsh conditions as Easterners made their way West and held out the promise of peace and abundance at the end of the trail.

How the native inhabitants of the West appeared in the artistic record forms the third thematic grouping. Through juxtaposition of pictures made before and after the 1840s' tidal wave of migration west, visitors will see how depictions changed from nobility and innocence to aggression and demonization.

The final three sections continue in the same analytical vein, with "Claiming the West" presenting paintings of the settlement and development of the West, which contributed to the myth of an ideal polity and economy; "The Kiss of Enterprise" concentrating on



The triumph of agricultural technology in California, based on a painting by Andrew Putnam Hill, held pride of place in this 1878 lithograph advertising warehousing for nature's bounty.

four western locations (now tourist destinations) to reveal the layers of meaning under the surfaces of the majestic natural spectacles; and "Doing the Old American" exposing the fact that many western depictions are both chronologically and geographically removed from their subject matter. Pictures of the West made by artists in the East, the show argues, says more about the culture in which the artists worked than about the frontier.

For art museums and historical societies with artworks of the West, *The West as America* provides a methodological basis to counteract the illusion of benign and unmediated matter-of-factness that characterizes many of them. Originally scheduled to travel to museums in Denver and St. Louis, the exhibit, because of financial constraints, will only appear at the National Museum of American Art through July 7, 1991. The show's catalogue, published by the Smithsonian press, thus takes on greater significance in conveying the thesis of *The West as America* to the rest of the museum community.— *Donald Garfield*

A visible marker of the rewards of assimilation for Native Americans who accepted entry into white society, Charles Nahl's 1867 portrait of a Northern California Indian named Wahla, entitled *Sacramento Indian with Dogs*, conforms to a tradition of portraying gentry in garden settings.

CALENDAR

The interior of a deep dish from the mid-17th century exemplifies the high quality of Chinese porcelain from the Butler collection, now on tour.

17th-Century Chinese Porcelain from the Butler Family Collection

After the death of the Ming Emperor in 1620, China's artists enjoyed increased freedom that led to new avenues of visual expression. A great variety of porcelain made for the European and Japanese markets in this so-called Transitional Period lasting 75 years attests to the inventiveness of the ceramic artists. More than 140 works are on display from the Butler family collection, which concentrates on a period to which scholars and collectors have paid relatively little attention. The exhibit was organized and circulated by Art Services International in Alexandria, Va.

Through June 9, 1991: Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City

June 29–August 11, 1991: Dixon Gallery and Gardens, Memphis, Tenn.

August 21–October 20, 1991: Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, S.C.

November 9–December 29, 1991: Huntsville Museum of Art, Huntsville, Ala.

March 21–May 3, 1992: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Va.

May 30–July 12, 1992: Charles W. Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, Calif.

Washington: Symbol and City

Despite its omnipresence (on currency as well as the nightly news), the nation's capital has yet to be the focus of a major installation examining the meanings of the city's urban design, monuments, and symbolic focus. *Washington: Symbol and City* answers this need in an exhibition that analyzes the built environment not only in terms of architectural style, but also in terms of the social and political dynamics at work, where the needs of city-dwellers jostle and compete with the city as showplace and tourist destination.

Permanent installation: National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.

Images of Penance, Images of Mercy: Santos and Ceremonies of the Hispanic Southwest (1860–1910)

Noted for their simple and colorful style, southwestern Hispanic *santos* constitute one of the great traditions of religious folk art in the U.S. Created in New Mexico and southern Colorado in the 19th century by Hispanic artists, these devotional images—mostly sculpture—were used by a penitential brotherhood, sometimes in Holy Week enactments of the Crucifixion.

Through July 14, 1991: Taylor Museum for Southwestern Studies, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs

August 25–October 20, 1991: Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore

January 17–March 15, 1992: University of Oklahoma Museum of Art, Norman, Okla.

April 11–June 7, 1992: Behring/Hoffman Educational Institute, Inc., Danville, Calif.

September 20–November 22, 1992: McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, Canada

The Landscape in 20th-Century Art: Selections from the Metropolitan Museum of Art

Intended to share the artistic riches of the Met with other U.S. institutions, *The Landscape in 20th-Century Art* is the fifth such collaborative exhibition between the museum and the American Federation of Arts, which is circulating the show. Consisting of 60 paintings from 1907 to the late 1980s, the exhibit offers visitors insights on the variety of approaches artists have adopted to depict the landscape and reveals an underlying concern among painters for the threat of the loss of nature.

Through June 9, 1991: Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Okla.

John Stuart Curry painted *Wisconsin Landscape* in 1938-39. It is being circulated along with other art treasures from the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

June 29–August 24, 1991: Center for the Fine Arts, Miami

September 14–November 10, 1991: Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Neb.

December 14–February 8, 1992: Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, Fla.

March 17–May 10, 1992: Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, S.C.

June 6–August 2, 1992: Madison Art Center, Madison, Wis.

September 11–November 8, 1992: Grand Rapids Art Museum, Grand Rapids, Mich.

African-American Artists 1880–1987: Selections from the Evans-Tibbs Collection

Major social and political events such as post-Civil War reconstruction, the Works Progress Administration, and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s contributed to the formation of African-American art. Organized by the Evans-Tibbs Collection in Washington, D.C., and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, *African-American Artists 1880–1987* surveys this subset of American art and consists of 71 watercolors, drawings, oil paintings, and photography by such artists as Howardena Pindell, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence.

Through June 9, 1991: Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago

June 29–August 11, 1991: Telfair Academy of Arts and Science, Savannah, Ga.

August 31–October 13, 1991: Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, Ind.

November 2–December 15, 1991: Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, Tenn.

January 11–February 23, 1992: Santa Fe Community College Art Gallery, Gainesville, Fla.

March 14–April 26, 1992: Stedman Art Gallery, Rutgers University, Camden, N.J.

Typologies: Nine Contemporary Photographers

As the title implies, the unifying principle of this exhibition, organized by California's Newport Harbor Art Museum, brings together photographs in black-and-white and color that form series of visually similar images devoted to a particular type of subject matter, such as domestic interiors, industrial architecture, or the human face. The American and German artists represented in *Typologies* evince an orientation that owes more to the traditions of docu-

The touring survey of African-American art from the Evans-Tibbs Collection includes this 1950 painting, *The Lovers*, by Lois M. Jones.

A collaborative product included in the *Team Spirit* exhibit is *Tree of Life*, color coupler prints dating to 1989 by Rimma Gerlovina and Valeriy Gerlovin.

mentary, ethnographic, and natural science photography than to traditional art historical models.

Through June 2, 1991: Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, Calif.

June 15–August 11, 1991: Akron Art Museum, Akron, Ohio

December 1–January 26, 1992: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

June 25–August 23, 1992: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco

As Seen by Both Sides: American and Vietnamese Artists Look at the War

An exhibition devoted to how artists from both sides of the Indochina conflict portrayed the war in Vietnam was conceived and curated by a former Army combat engineer and unofficial combat artist, C. David Thomas, now associate professor at Emmanuel College in Boston. More than 80 works by 20 American and 20 Vietnamese artists allow viewers to gauge how the war inspired artistic creativity. Vietnamese examples tend to focus on mundane activities realistically rendered—such as soldiers playing guitars and getting haircuts. The American approach was created after the fact and served as personal catharsis and critical commentary. After debuting at Boston University Art Gallery and a U.S. tour, *As Seen by Both Sides* will travel to seven venues in Vietnam.

Through May 25, 1991: Wight Art Gallery, University of California, Los Angeles

September 1–October 19, 1991: Art Center of Battle Creek, Battle Creek, Mich.

October 26–December 20, 1991: Waterworks Visual Arts Center, Salisbury, N.C.

January 2–February 24, 1992: Art and Culture Center of Hollywood, Hollywood, Fla.

March 3–May 4, 1992: Baxter Gallery, Portland School of Art, Portland, Maine

August 31–October 2, 1992: Richard F. Brush Art Gallery, St. Lawrence University, Canton, N.Y.

October 23–December 24, 1992: Lehigh University Art Galleries, Bethlehem, Pa.

The Here and the Hereafter: Images of Paradise in Islamic Art

Often considered for their brilliant aesthetic qualities, Islamic artworks pertaining to the religion's concept of the hereafter reveal essential characteristics of the culture and art of Muslim civilization. More than 50 objects spanning a wide range of media and styles, dating from the 9th to the 19th centuries—and representing the geographic breadth of Islam from Spain to India—are grouped into four sections: Paradise and the Word, Paradise Described, Paradise Symbolized, and Paradise Attained. Charles Moore, the architect of the exhibition's organizer, the Hood Museum of Art, designed an installation that evokes Islamic settings.

Through May 19, 1991: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

June 27–September 8, 1991: Asia Society Galleries, New York

September 26–December 15, 1991: Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine

January 22–March 29, 1992: University Art Museum, Berkeley, Calif.

April 24–June 28, 1992: Museum of Fine Arts, Springfield, Mass.

Team Spirit

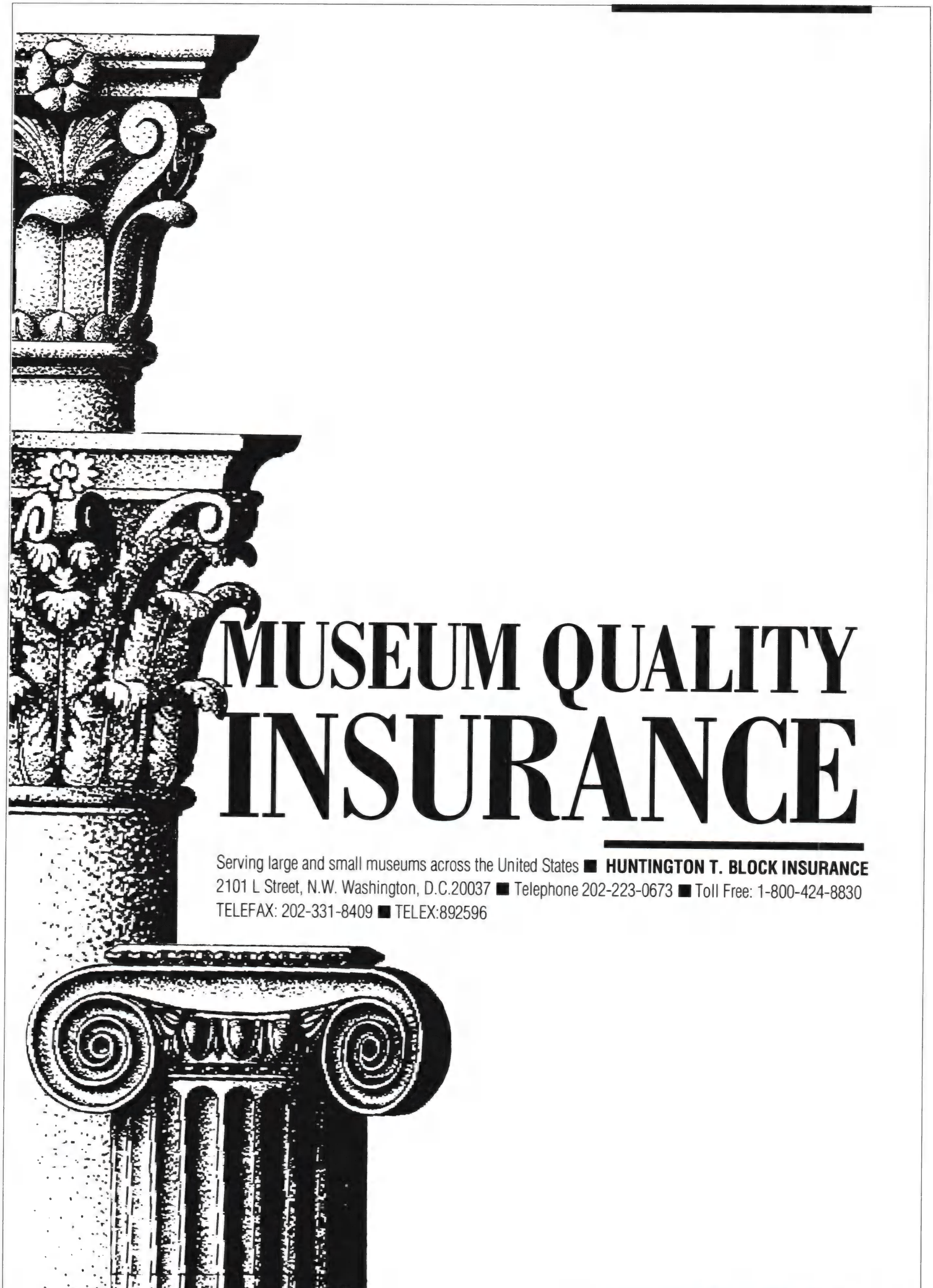
To celebrate the 15th anniversary of Independent Curators, Inc., as a New York City organizer and circulator of contemporary art exhibitions, *Team Spirit* presents painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, and installation work created by artistic collaborations in which the final creation possesses an artistic unity that belies its team process of production. Twenty-six teams are represented from the U.S., Canada, and Europe. The work falls into three thematic groupings: art about art; art about ecology and the environment; and art about social and political issues.

September 13–October 11, 1991: Art Museum of Florida International University, Miami

December 20, 1991–February 16, 1992: Scottsdale Center for the Arts, Scottsdale, Ariz.

June 7–July 26, 1992: Davenport Museum of Art, Davenport, Iowa

August 29–October 24, 1992: Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis □



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Reluctant Donor? Investigate a Charitable Remainder Trust

By Charles H. Morin

Museum development professionals are acquainted with reluctant donors who want to make a gift but feel they just can't afford to give their property away for nothing. Perhaps these people have a valuable piece of unproductive, appreciated real or personal property they would like to turn into cash, but they know the federal and state capital gain taxes would kill them if the property were sold. If only they could give the property to their favorite museum, they think, the museum could sell it tax-free and perhaps funnel some of the proceeds back to the family—maybe even for the rest of their lives; then, when they have died, the museum could keep what is left. And if they could retain control of the investment of the proceeds by naming themselves trustees, that would be most satisfying.

These reluctant donors are describing something called a charitable remainder trust. If an asset is donated to a charitable remainder trust (C.R.T.), it may be sold free of capital gain tax and the money reinvested in income-producing assets, such as bonds. The Internal Revenue Code requires C.R.T.s to make payments to one or more individuals for life or for a fixed term of not more than 20 years. When the income interests terminate, the remaining assets go to a designated charitable organization, such as a museum.

Charles H. Morin is a junior partner in the Boston law firm of Nutter, McClennen, and Fish.

The payments to the individuals may be in the form of an annuity (a fixed amount not less than 5 percent of the initial value of property placed in the trust) or a unitrust amount (a fixed percentage, not less than 5 percent, of the value of the trust's assets, valued annually). An annuity trust may not receive additional contribu-

tions after initial funding; a unitrust may, as long as a method of valuing those new contributions is prescribed.

Although C.R.T.s present a potentially beneficial opportunity for museums, they must be drawn up correctly, or the Internal Revenue Service will disallow them. The I.R.S. provides model trust documents that can be used to ensure qualification. Donors and museums should be aware of the legal issues when establishing a C.R.T. Two of the more intriguing issues are illustrated in the following scenario:

Let's say a reluctant donor has decided that if he is to part with his property, he wants (1) to receive a payout of 8 percent a year of the annually adjusted value of the trust property, which he believes his skillful investment of the trust funds easily would permit; (2) payment of that income to him for life, then to his wife for her life; and (3) to be named trustee of the charitable remainder unitrust. The property the donor is to contribute to the C.R.T. is valued at $1 million but has an outstanding $250,000 mortgage.

If the donor simply transfers his property to the C.R.T., subject to that quarter-million-dollar encumbrance, the transfer to the trust will be treated by the I.R.S. as a "bargain sale" of the land. The transaction will be taxed as if the donor had made a gift of the $750,000 unencumbered portion and sold the rest of the property to the trust for $250,000 cash, with the commensurate recognition of capital gain on that portion of the property. Assuming the donor's property is highly appreciated, he will pay a whopping tax for having transferred the land subject to the mortgage.

A partial solution to the problem avoids the bargain sale. It involves the donor combining his gift with an agreement to hold the trust (and the museum) harmless from all payments of interest and principal on the debt. In other words, the donor would avoid bargain sale treatment if he keeps the mortgage loan and continues to make payments on it. The charitable deduction then would be calculated on the basis of his $750,000 equity in the property, and as the donor makes payments on the mortgage, it is arguable that his principal

payments may be treated as additions to the trust property, because they increase the value of the trust's equity until it is sold. If the donor has created a unitrust, which is permitted to accept additional contributions, these contributions may be tax deductible.

The second issue in this scenario involves the donor's wish to serve as a trustee. Some lawyers worry that if a donor serves as trustee, the trust may fail to qualify as a C.R.T. because no completed gift has occurred (the donor continues to control the assets he purports to have given away).

Nothing in the tax code or I.R.S. regulations, however, forbids the donor from serving as trustee of his own C.R.T. as long as the donor-trustee's powers are limited. Such a donor-trustee cannot have power to revoke the trust, have too large a "reversionary" interest, have power to control the "beneficial enjoyment" of the body or income of the trust, or have any of a number of administrative powers over the trust property.

The trust in this scenario, for example, would fail to qualify as a C.R.T. if the donor retained liability on the mortgage and then caused the trust to pay off the mortgage. Use of trust income to satisfy the donor's legal obligation would cause him (rather than the museum) to be treated as the owner of the trust, with the result being the taxation of the donor on all the capital gain.

A charitable remainder trust can be an effective way to get a reluctant donor to make a valuable gift, once the donor's and the museum's lawyers have a grasp of legal issues—among them the problem of debt and the permissible identity of trustees.

I haven't discussed trust economics here, but they must be analyzed. Obviously, a C.R.T. must not be obligated to pay out too much of the trust's assets, lest the museum find at the end of the beneficiaries' lives that no remainder remains.

A donor with a big heart and genuine needs for retirement income may see in the C.R.T. a way to benefit the museum while retaining a tidy monthly income and some control over the fruits of his philanthropy, all with a little assist from the federal treasury. □

Adding to Collections: Indian Artifacts, German Tree Ornaments

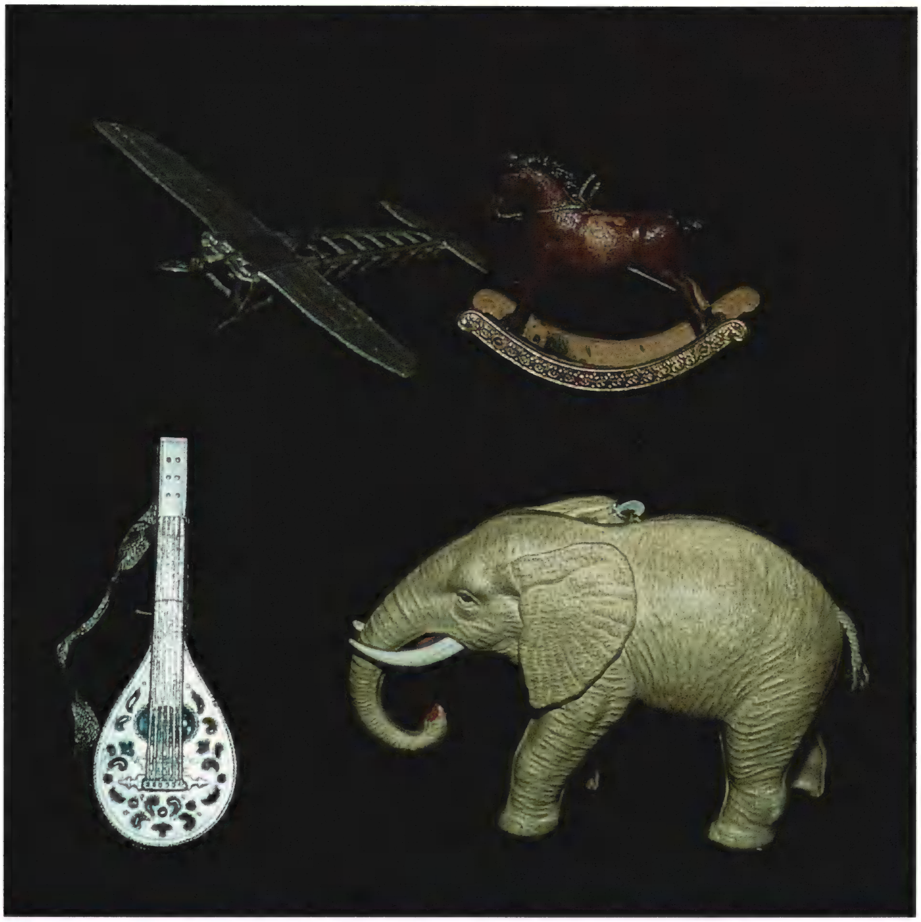
American Indian Art: High Desert Museum and Oregon Historical Society

The High Desert Museum in Bend, Ore., and the Oregon Historical Society in Portland have received a major gift of American Indian art and material culture from the Roger J. Bounds Foundation.

The foundation gave title of the Doris Swayze Bounds collection of American Indian art and artifacts to the High Desert Museum with the requirement that the museum and the historical society cooperate in the collection's conservation and use. The museum will build a new wing, the Hall of Native Peoples, to house the collection of several thousand objects and a research library.

Doris Bounds, chair of the foundation, built the collection throughout her lifetime. Born in Indian territory in what is now Muskogee, Okla., she moved to Oregon as a child, where she grew up in close association with the people of the Umatilla reservation. Her collection includes pieces associated with Chief Joseph and Chief Crazy Horse as well as leather clothing, basketry, pottery, bows and arrows, horse regalia, pipes, porcupine quillworks, and photographs. The col-

From the Bounds gift: beaded mocassins.



Although many Dresden tree ornaments were painted in gold or silver, most of the 45 recently donated to the Elmhurst Historical Museum in Illinois are painted in more realistic colors.

lection represents the native cultures of the Columbia River Plateau, the Pacific Northwest coast, the Great Basin, the Plains, and the Southwest, with artifacts from the prereservation and postreservation eras.

Dresden Tree Ornaments: Elmhurst Historical Museum

Known simply as "Dresdens" to collectors, 45 German tree ornaments have been donated to the Elmhurst Historical Museum in Elmhurst, Ill.

The ornaments, the gift of a local resident, were produced in Dresden, Germany, between 1880 and World War I. They are constructed of paper, embossed, and molded into a variety of three-dimensional shapes including animals, vehicles, and birds.

Catherine Bruck, Elmhurst's curator, hadn't heard of Dresdens until she began researching an exhibit for the holiday season on the evolution of Christmas tree decorating. When she located a few Dresdens at an antique dealer, Bruck learned the price was $175 apiece—too steep for the Elmhurst's acquisitions budget. But before the exhibition was finalized, a local resident and long-time donor offered for inclusion some paper ornaments she'd had for years. To the delight of Bruck and other staff members, they turned out to be Dresdens—and the museum received 45 ornaments in near-mint condition.

Dresdens are well-known by ornament collectors but rarely are found on the antique market. The paper ornaments were easily crushed and broken, and many were destroyed intentionally because of anti-German sentiment after the war.

According to Bruck, the acquisition is significant for the museum in two ways: It expands the collection of ornaments used to decorate American Christmas trees, and it is particularly applicable to Elmhurst, a largely German-American community.—*Nina G. Taylor*

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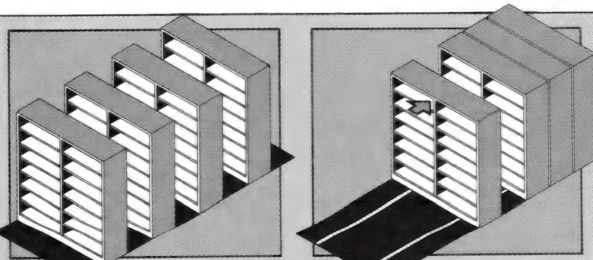

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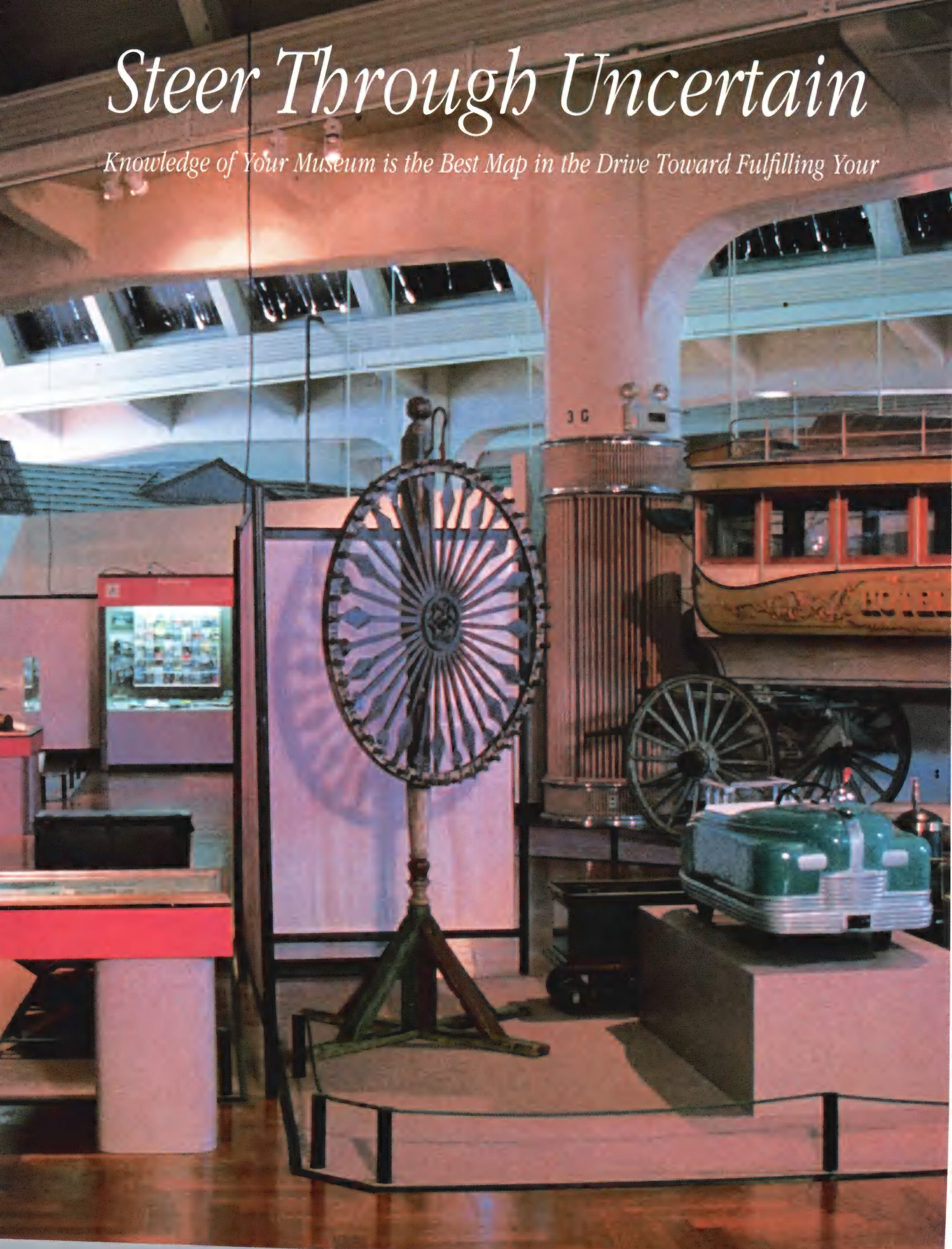
Steer Through Uncertain

Knowledge of Your Museum is the Best Map in the Drive Toward Fulfilling Your



Times

Mission in Tough Times

By Thomas M. Berger and G. Donald Adams

Management skills are put to their greatest test when outside dynamics threaten to disrupt or change the nature and source of a museum's financial resources. This is the situation confronting many museums today. Museums dependent on one or two major funding sources tend to be more vulnerable to economic uncertainty. And size does not necessarily protect an institution from a depressed local economy.

The actions taken by individual institutions are as varied as the reasons for current economic uncertainties. Some museums have attempted to weather the declining economy at possible risk to future operations. Staff positions have been reduced or eliminated, salaries have been frozen, early retirements encouraged, hours of operation cut back, endowment principal invaded. Others have formed coalitions to add clout to lobbying efforts or conducted studies to show legislators the impact of their institution on the local economy.

Mindful of the differences in each museum's situation—both externally and internally—we have identified areas that might be helpful to address in uncertain times.

Educate Yourself

First, become thoroughly acquainted with your sources of revenue and support. If attendance produces a significant portion of your earned income stream, up-to-date knowledge of your visitors is critical. If you are dependent on traditional means of support, such as annual giving, you need to educate yourself about participating individuals, corporations, and foundations. Look for patterns in past giving, and then determine if that pattern has changed.

Donors' philanthropic interests change, and so do their perceptions of whether a particular organization continues to serve a mission consistent with those interests. One method to help ensure continued and increased support is to review all communications—newsletters, magazines, annual reports, and so on—to make sure your message of stewardship is clear and concise.

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Overleaf: The *Americans on Vacation* exhibition at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Mich., which travels later this year, conforms to the museum's mission and is an economic draw as well.

It also is important to review the cost of acquiring new contributors, especially when tough times are compounded with adverse government actions like increased postal rates.

Question how responsive your donor prospects have been to direct mail, and consider making a larger (but perhaps more productive) investment in a telemarketing program. Closely evaluate the return from using an outside telemarketing firm as opposed to volunteers. It might well be worth the cost, especially when you add in the staff time required to work with volunteers. This type of analysis is valid wherever volunteers are used.

If you depend on state and local government funding, you need to clearly understand the critical path of decision making. Look for any obstacles that might now stand in the way of continued support and for any changes in the relationship of local and state governmental transfers of funds. This need to review your contacts and determine appropriate procedures applies to any affiliations you have, including universities and corporations.

Whatever the primary component of revenue, it can be dangerous to assume financing sources will remain constant. There are major variables outside your control (consumer confidence, government spending, the weather) that vary from region to region. What has happened at other institutions will not necessarily happen at yours. Attendance at one major science museum was virtually unaffected by the economic downturns in 1976–77 and 1981–82, for example, while sister institutions saw dramatic changes. During those recessions, some urban museums experienced attendance losses and others had gains, in part from local residents who sought to escape the realities of economic hardship.

It is important to review your relationship with members and others in the museum "family." Based on a survey, one museum repositioned its member program, placing greater emphasis on recreational benefits. Membership grew in spite of a depressed local economy.

Knowledge of changes in your audience is critical in difficult economic times. One history museum learned that only members were attending special-event weekends, despite local advertising. So publicity releases and announcements in the member newsletter were substituted for paid advertising with no subsequent drop in attendance.

Reviewing visitor behavior can be especially useful. Are visitors still coming from your traditional markets? Important questions arise from knowing this: What, for example, should be the target of efforts to increase attendance through advertising?

Analysis of overall visitor spending patterns also can suggest possible changes. What does it cost to spend a day at your museum? Observing visitor behavior may show that high prices or a complex ticket structure are turning people away at the door. Ask what you can do to increase spending once visitors are at your museum. Do you have an internal marketing program to promote on-site food and merchandise outlets?

Ask questions of trustees as well. Can they help with corporate, governmental, or foundation sources both by providing informed clues about what to expect and by influencing support of your institution? It is critical that communication links be established and maintained with all your constituencies. Of special importance are the heads of House and Senate Appropriation Committees and senators and representatives who are from your local district or who are especially interested in your operation. Opening new channels of communication to these people is critical, because all of your competitors are vying for political attention, too.

When assessing your situation, a questioning mind will create new linkages and concerns that might not otherwise surface. Among variations of questions that could inform critical decisions: How will local support of the public schools affect school visitation? How strong are bookings that have been made by outside organizations and visitors' bureaus? How is the local area's image being presented by the press?

Establish Priorities

With shrinking financial resources, museums need to address fundamental concerns related to their missions: the cost of conserving artifacts versus purchasing needed artifacts; the development of a new docent program for school groups against the development of a special-event weekend for casual visitors; the publishing of a scholarly journal against increased advertising? Perhaps most basic, what is required by having a public audience?

A proper starting point is a thorough review of your mission and the strategies in place for achieving that mission. Although a major planning effort might not seem appropriate when you are struggling financially, remember that an organization can become stronger when it prevails over adversity.

"Starting with the mission and its requirements may be the first lesson business can learn from successful non-profits," Peter F.

Drucker asserts in the July/August 1989 *Harvard Business Review*. "It focuses the organization on action. It defines the specific strategies needed to attain the crucial goals. It creates a disciplined organization. It alone can prevent the most common degenerative decisions of organizations . . . splintering their always limited resources on things that are 'interesting' or 'look profitable' rather than concentrating them on a very small number of productive efforts."

How can museums reduce the risk of moving in a direction not consistent with their missions? A possible answer comes from asking the broad questions. What is inherent in the nature of an institution that has made it what it is? What underlies the mission? What is the risk of choosing one action over another?

A mission-based strategic plan can provide the guidance that helps create a comprehensible, distinctive, and worthwhile on-site experience. It is an experience that people will continue to seek out in times when value for the dollar is as important as that other scarce resource—time. Without a mission that is clearly and consistently expressed and presented, visitors and supporters will look elsewhere for quality and value.

Because the mission of an institution is so fundamental, museum professionals can take it for granted, overlooking what is required to maintain proper direction. Does it still represent the consensus view of your governing authority and staff, or has the museum unknowingly moved off in a different direction? Has the focus of the mission become blurred by program development that is undisciplined, exhibits that are confusing, and a collection that is inappropriate?

The presentation of your mission might even be obsolete or inefficient. Costumed docents, antique ride vehicles, and evening lectures might be more expensive than other methods of interpretation. State cutbacks during a recession rendered one museum's elaborate school group program obsolete when large numbers of schools no longer could afford transportation to the museum. Narrowing the curriculum focus simplified the presentation, allowing the museum to create an outreach program that still served students, only more efficiently and for less cost.

Analyze the Organizational Structure

What comprises appropriate action after reviewing your situation and the fundamental aspects of your mission? Because museums are committed to allocating as much of their resources as possible to programming, it is im-

Costumed interpreters like those playing at traditional games on the Greenfield Village green provide a dynamic way of providing visitors a sense of the reality of earlier eras.

perative to ask how internal costs can be minimized while still providing adequate support to the organization. A good place to begin is an analysis of your organizational structure.

In addition to asking if you have too many layers of management and staff, you might ask if you have duplicated activities. These duplications develop slowly over time in most cases, more rapidly if your institution has grown or changed significantly in a short period of time. Growth that might produce structural change could include a new gallery or theater or a new program that supplements traveling exhibitions.

A strong program staff puts special demands on administrative and support services. If the support staff is unable to respond, the program staff tends to develop its own resources. The result can be individual miniature organizations throughout the museum that not only duplicate each other but also duplicate central services (such as finance). This type of duplication is most obvious when departments request multiple copies of everything from purchase orders to invoices, thus indicating they are running their own system to track activity. If this is being done, it requires a person to do it—which means adding staff members or paying overtime.

Less noticeable are those activities that are similar in nature but not necessarily true duplications. One example is the coordinating of functions and events. Most institutions host functions for a variety of reasons: fund raising, trustee cultivation, exhibition openings, rentals to outside groups. Although each of these events has a different purpose, they also have elements in common, such as scheduling space and organizing the event. It is in the staffing to handle these common elements that duplication can occur. Effective analysis can sort out these duplications and allow for staff consolidation and expense reduction.

Another important question: What will be the impact on public programs if the museum cuts expenses across the board? Near-term savings can be lost over the long term. What will it take to restore programmatic offerings lost to the budget ax? There are no real savings if you cut programs that are paid by restricted funds. Trying to save your pet project? The impact on morale may negate any perceived savings when something more important is eliminated to save your favorite program.

Throughout your review and analysis, look to basic management tactics to make adjustments, still staying on course to meet the goal of your mission. If corporate giving is off, place more effort on raising funds from individuals. General attendance levels down? Ask how you can strengthen internal marketing efforts to maximize spending by visitors. If a popular program funded by operations is threatened, look again for restricted support. Foundations must continue giving funds, regardless of the general economy.

Above all, critically assess old ideas. If something worked well in the past, consider reusing it. An event or program that drew a large and appreciative audience might be repeated. Likewise, a concept rejected out of hand before might now be appropriate. Look inside and outside the cultural community, and borrow ideas that worked.

The knowledge you have of your institution, combined with management fundamentals, are the greatest help in steering your museum through uncertain economic times. Now is the best time to put extra effort into finding out what you need to know about your institution to be able to continue moving it forward in the fulfillment of its mission. □

Tell Us Where You Stand

In the accompanying article, Thomas M. Berger and G. Donald Adams emphasize the role of museum mission as the philosophical peg on which institutions hang their wardrobe of programs and services. It is a key to success, yet "because the mission of an institution is so fundamental, we tend to take it for granted, overlooking what is required to maintain proper direction." The authors suggest asking these questions: Has the museum moved away from its mission? Has its focus become blurred "by program development that is undisciplined, exhibits that are confusing, and a collection which is inappropriate"? Our *Your Vantage Point* question for this issue:

Do museums generally place mission at the center of institutional life, so that a clear and appealing message goes out to potential audiences? If not, what is the major factor preventing it?

Let us and your colleagues know what you think. To air your opinion, turn to the reader service card facing page 104, and write your comments on the card. Then drop the card in the mail (we've already paid the postage). We'll collect your comments and report on them in the July/August issue of the magazine.

Thanks.

Regional Roundup

From the Mountains to the Prairies to the Oceans: This Snapshot Shows How Museums Across the U.S. are Weathering the Recession

By Donald Garfield and Evan Roth

To paint with broad strokes a picture of how U.S. museums are weathering the current recession risks stating either the obvious or the anomalous. Judging from press reports and conversations with museum workers, cutbacks echo throughout the profession, including hiring freezes, cuts in museum library acquisitions, staff reductions, and travel cuts. A telephone survey of the six AAM regions reinforces the perception that the entire community of cultural institutions is experiencing fundamental changes commensurate with the shifts that U.S. society is facing as it enters the final decade of the 20th century.

What follows is a mosaic of snapshots taken during March, as the nation breathes a sigh of relief after the Persian Gulf War and as pundits and politicians try to convince the population that the 1990–91 recession will be a thing of the past come summer.

New England

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont

After more than a year of recession, museums in virtually all of the six states in the region have had to lay off staff members, cut programs, or shorten visiting hours. State governments have cut their support of museums and other cultural institutions. Tough economic times even are increasing the tensions between museum directors and their boards.

A survey conducted last summer of 151 institutions by the New England Museum Association (N.E.M.A.) found that nearly half had seen their financial pictures worsen over the previous year. Today things aren't much better. Thomas Costello, director of the four city museums in Springfield, Mass., says he doesn't foresee the financial picture improving in the region for as long as 18 months.

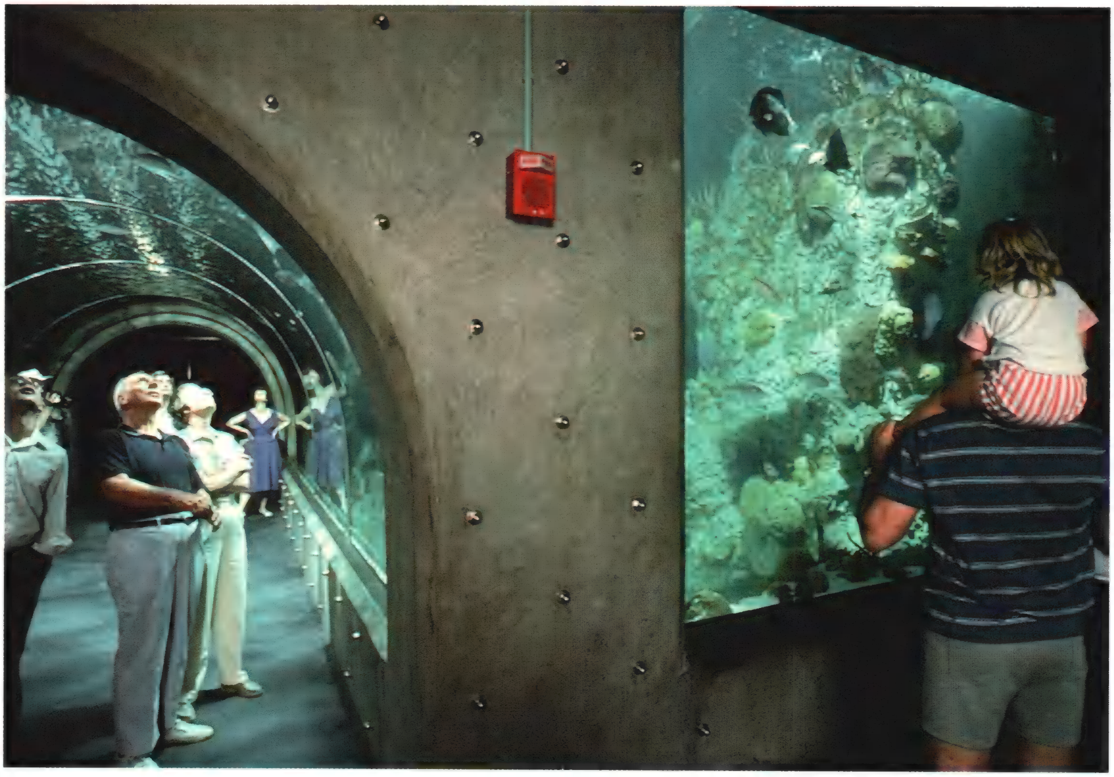
Costello's museums cut back their visiting hours from 30 days a month to 16 four-hour days a month back in summer 1989. The retrenchment has required him and his staff to set priorities and focus more clearly on the museums' missions. "That gives us a sense of hope," he says. But he adds, "It's hard to keep things going in a positive way."

Donald Garfield and Evan Roth are associate editors of Museum News.

Of the New England states, none is hit harder than Massachusetts, once the symbol of economic boom, now the symbol of economic bust. The state's new governor, Republican William Weld, must attack a huge state budget deficit. Budgetary and political realities have forced him to place spending on social services above items such as culture. Political observers speculate that Weld—a Yankee blue blood—wants to avoid the appearance that he favors "elitist" programs over services to the poor and so is forcing agencies such as the Massachusetts Cultural Council to take a big hit. At its peak, the Cultural Council, which has supported many museums, particularly small ones, had a budget of $27 million; this year, its budget is $12 million. Weld has proposed cutting that by 75 percent, to $3 million. The cuts "would gut virtually all museum programs," says Laura Roberts, N.E.M.A.'s executive director, leaving only money that helps museums reduce admission prices.

Other evidence of hard times: The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston has instituted admission fees for the first time. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, has inaugurated admission fees for children of school age and moved its free hours from Saturday morning—a time popular with tourists—to Wednesday afternoon, when visitation is traditionally low. "People are feeling very discouraged here," Roberts says.

One sign of hope is that Weld has proposed doubling the state's tourism promotion budget. Tourism has plummeted in New England because of higher gasoline prices and the drop in disposable income. Better tourism promotion, a continued moderation of gasoline prices, and good weather this summer would be a boon to tourist-dependent institutions such as the



Despite a deep recession in Louisiana, New Orleans's Audubon Institute raised $23 million in three years and pushed through a $25 million bond issue to build the Aquarium of the Americas. It now is one of the city's leading tourist attractions.

Plimoth Plantation, which has had to lay off employees.

In Maine, traditionally the poorest of the New England states, several staff members of the state arts council have been laid off. The arts councils in Vermont and New Hampshire have cut aid to museums, although the cuts have not been deep. Museums and other nonprofit institutions in Vermont faced a bigger challenge when the legislature almost repealed their property tax exemption.

In the meantime, corporate support for museums, which traditionally has been high in the region, is down markedly because corporate profits are down, especially among high-tech firms that were the engine of the region's 1980s prosperity. With private and public funding so scarce, tensions between museum directors and their boards are increasing, according to one knowledgeable museum professional. "I'm seeing a lot of dysfunctional relationships between boards and directors," said this source, who asked not to be identified. Much of the tension arises from directors and trustees blaming each other for not raising enough money. Several directors reportedly have been fired over disputes about the way they have steered their institutions through the tough times.

Mid-Atlantic

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania

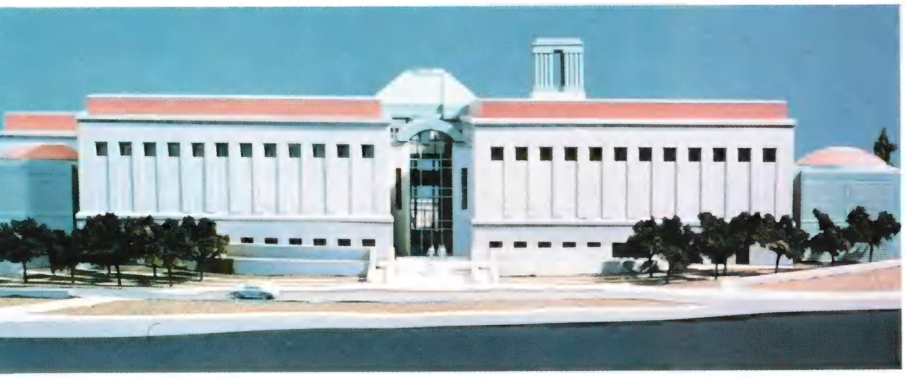
Many museums in the Mid-Atlantic are experiencing financial difficulties that mirror the recession in which much of the region is mired.

Perhaps hardest hit is New York, where both state and city governments are facing enormous budget deficits. Governor Mario Cuomo has proposed cutting the New York State Council on the Arts budget by more than half, from $56.4 million to $27.8 million. Museums receive sizeable support from the council. "It looks like a catastrophic situation," Carole Huxley, New York's deputy commissioner of education for cultural education, told *Museum News*. State Senator Roy Goodman (R-Manhattan), who serves on the National Council for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts governing body, equated the proposed cut to being "hit by a Scud missile." The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, which funds 31 cultural institutions in the city, including several museums, is cutting its budget by 4.2 percent. New York is not alone; the arts councils in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., also are facing cuts.

Museums throughout the region are laying off workers, cutting programs, and reducing hours to cut their budgets. The Brooklyn Museum, for instance, has sustained a cut of $322,000, forcing it to close on Mondays in addition to its traditional Tuesday closing. Thirty positions have been cut, requiring the layoff of 21 full-time and two part-time employees. Similarly, the city has cut its subsidy to the American Museum of Natural History by $744,577, an 11.1 percent reduction, and the museum faces an additional 19 percent reduction in July. Ad-

ministrators there now are debating whether to reduce educational programs for children, close exhibition halls during the day, reduce hours, or raise the recommended admission fees. Even the petting zoo in Central Park is a victim of the economic malaise; it's being closed.

The New York State Museum in Albany has closed two galleries and cut 10 positions from its staff of 200. According to Huxley, whose office oversees the museum, "Some of our best exhibition people have left." The New York State Parks and Historic Sites Department has closed three properties: Phillips Manor in Yonkers, Guy Park Manor in Amsterdam, and the Knox Headquarters in New Windsor. The Newark Museum in New Jersey and several other museums in the state have laid off workers as well, according to Rebecca Wilson, executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums.



When the new Minnesota Historical Society building (seen here in an architectural model) opens in 1992, it will stand as a symbol of the support Minnesota gave its cultural institutions during the 1980s, when the state economy prospered.

Although museums are taking it on the chin, they are also searching for ways to cope. Wilson says that many museums are joining forces and becoming more aggressive in seeking support from foundations and corporations. "Collaboration is the key word for 1991 and the rest of the '90s," Wilson said. With the support of the Pew Charitable Trusts, for example, 14 historic houses, gardens, and arboreta in the Delaware and Brandywine Valley are offering a "Golden Passport," a book of discount coupons for the institutions.

Southeast

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia

One of the largest regions in the country, the size and diversity of the Southeast states is reflected in the financial state of their museums. At the region's northernmost tip, Virginia museums are being socked by major cuts in state funding. At the southernmost point, Florida museums have experienced a rough winter of high gasoline prices and low tourism. Museums in Louisiana, once one of the nation's economic basket cases, are experiencing a resurgence after years of recession.

According to Pamela Meister, executive director of the Southeastern Museums Conference, museums in most parts of the region are generally seeing slightly decreased earned income and visitations. Surprisingly, the one exception is Louisiana, which is trying to pull itself out of a 10-year recession brought on by the collapse of its petroleum industry. "We're seeing signs of a slow and slight recovery," said Meister, who is based in Baton Rouge. One indication is that her office is now receiving calls from groups that want to organize new museums and need technical assistance.

The Audubon Institute in New Orleans, which runs the city's zoo, aquarium, and nature preserves, was cited in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* as an institution that has been able to grow despite the economic downturn. In the early 1980s, at the local economy's nadir, the institute began work on a fund-raising drive, which culminated in \$23 million in contributions in three years. The Audubon Institute also successfully persuaded voters to approve a special tax to raise \$25 million for its new Aquarium of the Americas. The aquarium has become one of New Orleans's most popular tourist attractions. Construction on its Species Survival Center, where endangered species will be bred, will begin in the summer. And membership has grown. One of the secrets to the institute's success, Executive Director Ron Forman told the *Chronicle*, was its development staff. "In the late 1970s, we didn't even have a development staff," Forman said. "Now we have 20 people working in development."

Florida had a poor tourist winter in late 1990 and early 1991 because of the Persian Gulf War, the resulting precipitous rise in gasoline prices, and fickle weather. That translated to budget troubles for the state and a decline in visitation to many of the state's museums. "We're not getting people to Disney World, so [tourist] spending is way down," noted Graig Shaak, assistant director of the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville. Facing a deficit, the state cut funding to the University of Florida, which operates the museum, by 8.5 percent. The museum was forced to close on Mondays and reduce visiting hours by two hours a day. But much of the cut in funds has been made up by the success its research staff has had in obtaining grants. "We think we've bottomed out," Shaak said—adding, however, that the museum and other state agencies have been asked to cut their budgets by 5 percent in fiscal year 1992. Meanwhile, with the end of the Gulf War

and the decline in gasoline prices, there is hope that tourism will return to normal levels.

The picture is bleakest in Virginia, where some 40 museums depend heavily on state government support. Facing a deficit of more than $2.2 billion out of a budget of $24 billion, Democratic Governor Douglas Wilder has sought massive cuts, and one of his targets is funding to cultural institutions. In his budget address, Wilder said, "We must separate the niceties from the necessities," and in his mind, support for museums is a "nicety." Therefore, Wilder called for an immediate 25 percent cut in support for museums that are not part of the state government. For the 1992 fiscal year, Wilder wants to eliminate virtually all state funding for these institutions.

The Virginia Commission on the Arts, which provides the funds for these museums, would see its budget reduced from $5 million to $1.5 million. Museums administered by the state would have their budgets reduced by between 11 and 22 percent. The state's tourism department also has had its budget cut. Museums throughout the state have laid off employees and have reduced their programs.

"We're not kidding. A generation of children could miss out on museum programs because of these cuts," said Judy Harris, executive director of the Virginia Association of Museums. "It will take a long time to recover."

Midwest

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin

How unfair that Detroit's museums, which occupied center stage in the *Museum News* coverage of the early 1980s recession, should again be under the spotlight. But as Sam Sachs, director of the hard-hit Detroit Institute of Arts, remarked, "When the rest of the Midwest catches an economic cold, Detroit—because of its dependence on the health of the automobile industry—comes down with pneumonia." Despite the pride of success in diversifying its funding base beyond the strapped city of Detroit, the two supplemental sources—the National Endowment for the Arts (N.E.A.) and the state—have proved ultimately as unreliable in times of economic stress as the city treasury.

Sachs says the massive cuts in state aid to the arts and museums announced by Republican Governor John Engler on January 1 now awaits the legislative response. A freeze on allocated funds has been met with astonishment on the part of those who have planned programs and capital expenses for this fiscal year. If the draconian cuts get legislative approval, Sachs predicts Michigan will become a cultural wasteland in which corporate executives would be hesitant to locate their headquarters.

In response to the cuts, which includes reductions in the so-called "equity package" that directs state funds to Detroit institutions of major statewide impact, the museum has turned to gallery rotations and an additional day of closure. Recognizing that politics enters the decision to redirect monies away from the arts and toward social services, Sachs emphasizes how important advocacy has become in the current economic and political climate after the savaging of the arts community last year. To counter being positioned as competing with the homeless and the elderly, the museum's recorded message service includes as its first option a telephone hot line to make callers' voices heard in the legislature. To date, more than 6,000 letters have been sent protesting the proposed cutoff of funding.

According to Ian Stewart, deputy director of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, his museum and other cultural organizations shared in the state's prosperity of the 1980s, with the most tangible symbol of that being the $50 million state contribution to the society's new building, part of a nexus of such institutions in the Twin Cities. (Iowa also boasts the completion of a new historical society complex in Des Moines, where the museum anchors major urban development.) Having the state capitol a stone's throw away made history's case a visible presence. Now that the state must reduce expenditures in the face of an economic downturn, Stewart says museums are contributing their fair share of cuts: "While all cuts are difficult, the ones we now face are manageable."

David Huntley, director of the University Museum on the campus of Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville (and president of the Association of College and University Museums and Galleries), says because his institution is heavily dependent on state funds, it has seen cuts trickling down from the governor's mansion. As in Michigan, a new governor in Illinois, Republican Jim Edgar, put a freeze on all capital projects not already under construction and asked higher education to return to the state treasury 1 percent of its operating budget.

Noting the effects unemployment, recession, and flat funding coupled with significant inflation have on institutions such as his, Huntley predicts museums are in for more tough times. The controversy surrounding the Robert Mapplethorpe photography exhibit last year, while ostensibly centered on censorship and support for N.E.A., plays out as well in state legislatures, he says, where the voices of

In Virginia, where some 40 museums depend heavily on state government support, the governor has sought massive budget cuts—and one of his targets is funding to cultural institutions. He called for an immediate cut of 25 percent in support for museums that are not part of the state government. And for 1992, he wants to eliminate virtually all state funding for these institutions

conservatives can have a chilling effect.

Moreover, the sometimes tenuous position of university museums makes them ready targets of budget cutters, says Huntley. They are less insulated than academic programs and may be low in the administrative hierarchy, with directors reporting to college deans and department heads rather than directly to the provost. Too often, according to Huntley, campus museums are seen by students, administrators, and politicians as repositories of old artifacts and are not included in the mainstream of university life. He says his and similar museums should strive to be perceived as primary educational resources on a par with campus libraries. To do this, he says, they need to assume a prominent leadership role in the move toward greater emphasis on education, as well as turn to the private sector for support.

Mountain-Plains

Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming

Unlike the East and West coasts, the states making up the vast Mountain-Plains region tend not to have private museums, but institutions dependent on local, state, or federal funding. Dennis Medina, museum curator at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kan., and president of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association, reports that conversations with colleagues have yielded predictable responses emphasizing the negative effects declining tourism has had on museums—both in direct revenues from admissions and sales and indirectly through contraction of the state or city coffers into which visitors' dollars flow.

In Kansas, the economic challenges have led to expanded advertising on radio and at information booths set up at entry points of the two main interstate highways. Efforts to get the museum story told in the press have resulted in expanded coverage of museum exhibits. And the trend among Kansans to travel close to home during times of economic stress have reaped a harvest of attendance at cultural sites

In Kansas, where many museums are small and have low visitation, Medina notes that the economic challenge has led to expanded advertising on the radio and at information booths set up at entry points of the two main interstate highways. Efforts to get the museum story told on radio, television, and in newspapers have resulted in expanded coverage of museum exhibits. Public perception of the state's museums is changing from dust closets to places of education and entertainment, he says. Medina also notes the success of museums in places like Salina, Kan., in involving their local communities. Trends among Kansans to travel close to home during times of economic stress and when oil and gasoline prices are elevated have reaped a harvest of attendance at the state's cultural and natural sites.

A recurrent theme in the region brings museums into cooperative ventures. Albuquerque, for example, had several of its museums turn programming over to the ever-popular topic of dinosaurs. Coordination and greater use of advertising are two responses of museums in a region whose economy is dominated by the oil industry and agriculture (the shakiness of the former contrasts with the general stability of the latter owing to continued federal farm subsidies).

Of the region's member states vulnerable to the effects of the hot and cold winds of economic turmoil, Texas looms large. Jack Nokes, acting director of the Laguna Gloria Museum of Art in Austin, Texas, and president of the Texas Association of Museums, characterizes the situation in his museum-rich state as having already weathered economic dislocation because of the jolts of real-estate speculation, bank failures, and petroleum-industry declines dating to 1985–86. He cites the unwillingness of the current municipal administration to follow through with the building of the new Laguna Gloria Museum, which has been put on hold although bonds were passed.

Nokes says he senses, however, an upswing in his colleagues' sense of the future, to judge from the flurry of expansions under way and the pace of major gifts—particularly in places like Dallas and Houston, where private sources supplement governmental largess. Examples include the planned Hamon Wing at the Dallas Museum of Art to house part of the permanent collection and temporary exhibits and the opening of the Ewing Halsell Wing for Ancient Art at the San Antonio Museum of Art.

Although Texas ranks close to the bottom in state support for the arts, Nokes sees distinct patches of blue on the horizon: His museum association membership nears 700, and museums have responded creatively and cooperatively to economic stress.

Evidence to counter the argument faced in many locales—how can the state and/or city justify spending precious revenues on museums when people are homeless and hungry—comes from a document published late last year by the Museum of New Mexico (and available to museum professionals upon written request). The museum director, Thomas A. Livesay, is trying to convince state legislators that rather than being an economic drain, museums and monuments constitute major sources of revenue to the tune of a return of \$206 for each dollar provided the museum from the state's general fund appropriation of \$3.7 million during 1989–90. Indeed, the current national love affair with things southwestern may be a critical boon for social programs: Despite a reduction of capital monies from \$40 million to \$2 million by the state, on which the museum system consisting of 22 museums

and properties depends, Livesay says he is confident that the current lull is temporary.

West

Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington

The West has not escaped the recession-related dislocations its eastern neighbors have felt. Southern California, for its part, has had to factor in a five-year drought that threatens to compound problems of diminished state and county support. Among types of museums, according to Gail Anderson, president of the Western Museums Conference and director of the Center for Museum Studies at J.F.K. University in San Francisco, variance of severity occurs within regions but generally the distinction is between large and small institutions. The latter, she observes, are more agile and more quickly capable of involving their community to come to their aid, while the bigger ones are reeling and having to contemplate staff layoffs, consolidation of positions, and curtailment of programming. She speculates that small institutions are already "mean and lean" and used to tough times.

Anderson cites a recent example of grassroots support for one such small museum, the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro. With a full-time staff of six and no exhibits specialist, the institution created a link with Pile Drivers Local 2375 to fashion the exhibition *Building America, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.* The men who made the piers took charge of the exhibit, funded it, and used it as a way to tell the union's story as it celebrated its 70th anniversary. Opening up the museum in this way netted the San Pedro museum a surge in memberships.

Anderson cites this as an example of a museum responding to the call for community relevance and diversity, to which the recession has only been added as another pressure for change. Success of this sort, however, is not the sole property of modest-sized museums. Proving that similar community support awaits large institutions, Anderson recalls that the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco were able to garner from the community the funding for the major show *Great Dutch Paintings in America* even though it lost the corporate largess of Dutch Shell Oil Co. after the protests coinciding with the planned visit of Nelson Mandela to San Francisco. The combination of a higher public profile and greater scrutiny by segments of the museum's constituency of corporate sponsorship poses formidable challenges for museums in an atmosphere of economic stress and heightened expectations. Museums, according to Anderson, must not use the recession as an excuse not to proceed with diversifying staff and programming and with becoming more community-responsive institutions.

The new thinking manifested in discussions about cultural diversity carries a corollary of shifting priorities. Especially in today's climate, museums cannot do everything: To do one thing means you cannot do something else. In some institutions, this may involve a reexamination of the purely scholarly component without public-education ramifications. Strains are beginning to appear.

Reporting from Los Angeles, Kate Sibley, executive director of the Western Museums Conference, notes the pervasiveness of economic stress and low morale in some of the area's museums. The large institutions feel the loss of tourists, school groups, and occasional visitors more than smaller museums. Complacency with the types of audiences museums attract—and faith that there always will be money for programming and expansion—are luxuries museums no longer can afford. Sibley maintains that for many in the Los Angeles area, going to a museum is not part of their culture, so museums need to work that much harder to gain their support. Her prognosis: "It's not too late. It's just too late to be easy."

Dan Monroe, president of the Portland Art Museum in Oregon and Vice President of AAM, speaking about the Northwest, one of the few bright spots in the economy, says the problem in his state is not the recession as much as it is voter-passed limitations on taxation, with their immediate disastrous effects on the arts, education, and social services.

He rejects the notion that there exists one model all museums can follow to cope with the current downturn. "Each institution differs in terms of its mission, discipline, and mix of financial support," he says. Vast expansion among art museums over the past decade has added enormous demands on operating budgets. To cope, museums need to adopt the best management styles now being put into effect by U.S. companies, which have had to change the way they do business to stay competitive.

Monroe's advice for museums in tight economic straits is to adopt procedures "to do more and be more effective with less or equal money." Downscaling, maximizing human resources, and marketing the museum's educational mission to the community all are important, he says. In one respect, the recession may actually be a blessing in disguise, he adds, forcing institutions to cast off out-of-date procedures and prepare themselves for a future that promises to hold other challenges. □

In Oregon, the problem is not the recession as much as it is voter-passed limitations on taxation, with their immediate disastrous effects on the arts, education, and social services. To cope, museums need to adopt the best management styles now being put into effect by U.S. companies, which have had to change the way they do business to stay competitive

Rich and Poor

As This Economist Explains, a Distressing Contrast Exists Between the 'Value' Of Art Museum Collections and the Institutions' Modest Operating Budgets

By Martin Feldstein

Art museums are a vital part of our culture, but financially, they are relatively neglected stepchildren of our affluent economy. As nonprofit institutions, they lack both the ability to raise financial resources in the ways that profit-making businesses can and the substantial public funding of government activities. The largesse that can flow to universities from loyal alumni is not available to museums.

The sharp rise in the value of paintings and other forms of art during the past decade has made museums both remarkably rich and at the same time remarkably poor. They are rich if measured by the value of their collections at current market prices, but poor because the sharp rise in the relative price of art severely limits their ability to acquire additional works of art.

Museums that are so rich in art are also poor when judged by the operating budgets available for the preservation, protection, restoration, display, and education associated with that art. There is a distressing contrast between the cultural importance and artistic treasures of leading U.S. museums and their very modest operating budgets. The 150 largest art museums, according to a survey conducted by the Association of Art Museum Directors, have a combined annual operating budget of less than \$1 billion—not even 1 percent of national spending on higher education and only about as much as Americans spend each year on fishing tackle or golf equipment.

The federal government's annual support through the National Endowment for the Arts is less than \$15 million. The total direct support of art museums from all levels of government to nongovernmental museums totals only about \$70 million a year, about equal to the federal government's daily spending on farm subsidies.

The budget stringency of museums reflects not only their status as private nonprofit organizations but also their mission to preserve art and to display it to a broad public. The mission of displaying art to the public restricts revenue by limiting the appropriate admission charges.

Donations like this 5th-century B.C. Greek vase, given to the new Ewing Halsell Wing of the San Antonio Museum of Art, are primary avenues of art museum acquisition.

Opposite: A public-private partnership funded the Cedar Rapids Museum of Art in Iowa, a Winter Garden linking the former Carnegie Library to the addition by architect Charles Moore.

Although a for-profit organization with a collection of Rembrandts or Renoirs might be able to earn substantial income by charging very high admission fees, a nonprofit museum would not follow such a policy because the resulting substantial decline in attendance would be contrary to the museum's basic mission.

The character of museums restricts their financial ability in another important way. Additions to a museum's collection as well as the restoration and preservation of the existing collection are analogous to the investment in plant and equipment by a manufacturing business. But unlike a for-profit business, museums cannot finance these investment activities by issuing equity. And although the art collections themselves are very valuable assets, the very purpose of the museum as a curator and public displayer of art means that the collections cannot be treated like financial assets or like the assets of an ordinary business that can be sold whenever funds are needed.

It is convenient to organize this discussion of art museum economics into three parts: the uses of funds, the sources of funds, and the necessary trade-offs among conflicting goals that museums must face.

Art Museums and the Use of Funds

Consider first the three major uses of art museum funds: operating costs, art acquisitions, and the construction of new facilities.

Operating costs are primarily personnel costs, including the professional staff and the support staff of office employees, maintenance workers, guards, and so on. Because of the na-

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ture of museum activities, there is little or no scope for the type of technical progress that reduces labor inputs in manufacturing businesses and financial enterprises. Operating costs are therefore likely to rise indefinitely at about the same rate as wages—and therefore at a rate that is about two percentage points greater than the rate of increase of the general price level. This has important implications for endowment management, which I will discuss in a moment.

Acquisitions of new works of art will depend primarily on gifts and bequests. The current tax rules (particularly the rules subjecting the appreciation in the value of gifts of appreciated property to the alternative minimum tax) are clearly a major barrier to the ability of museums to attract gifts of important works of art. Unless the tax rules are modified, expensive artworks are likely to lie beyond the reach of all but a very few institutions. The temporary exemption from the alternative minimum tax rule for gifts of art to museums is due to expire at the end of 1991 unless Congress and the Administration can be persuaded to make it permanent.

Although museums will continue to purchase art, the heavy burden of operating expenses will absorb most of the unrestricted funds, and the high prices of major works will make purchases difficult. The most likely source of funds for purchases will be from deaccessioning some items from the collection to strengthen or diversify the collection in other ways. (The subject of deaccessioning is also one to which I will return later.)

Finally, there is spending on the construction of new buildings or the expansion of old ones. Because museums generally have much more art than they have the space to exhibit, there is always pressure to expand the size of the museum itself. As in other nonprofit organizations, museums find it is often far easier to raise funds for a major building than for operating expenses. Limitations on operating budgets as well as construction funds mean, therefore, that art museums that are eager to display more of their total collection will have to develop creative ways of showing a larger portion of their collection in a limited amount of space, even if that means a less-than-ideal presentation of some of the material.

Where the Money Comes From

Except for museums that are supported by federal, state, and local government, most are private nonprofit organizations that must depend for their funds on admission charges, charitable gifts, the limited profits that are generated by museum shops and restaurants, a relatively small amount of endowment income, and an even smaller amount of funds from the government.

Included in a bequest from local arts patron Gilbert M. Denman to the San Antonio museum is this Roman marble portrait bust of a boy dating to the 1st century.

In practice, revenues from admissions provide only about 5 percent of the total income of the largest 150 art museums. Traditional economic analysis provides a reason for concluding that an art museum should, in principle, not be funded through admission charges. Although the analysis is familiar to economists, it is worth reviewing.

A fundamental idea in economics is that a nation's resources are used in the best way when each economic activity is expanded to the point at which the benefit to consumers of any further expansion is just balanced by the cost of providing one more unit of that activity. Thus the production of bread should be increased until the value of the last loaf (as measured by a consumer's willingness to pay for it) is equal to the cost of producing it. If there is another consumer who valued an additional loaf of bread more than the cost of producing it, it would be good to produce the extra bread. But if the last loaf could not be sold for what it costs to produce, too much bread is being made.

When applied to art museums, this implies that as long as an extra visitor to the museum would impose no additional costs on the museum or on other visitors, the ideal admission policy is to have no charge at all. Even a modest admission charge might deny someone who wished to see the collection the opportunity to do so, even though it would impose no cost. It would be wrong to restrict attendance in this way, just as it would be wrong not to produce a loaf of bread when there is a buyer willing to pay more than the incremental cost of production.

Some charge could be justified for visitors to particularly popular exhibitions or whenever the galleries are crowded because the existence of crowds reduces the enjoyment of other visitors and thereby imposes a kind of nonmonetary "cost." But these "congestion based" admission charges would not be able to cover the total cost of the museum's activities (including conservation) at the appropriate level of intensity.

The conservation activities of the museum benefit not only those who currently visit the museum. Future generations of visitors will benefit from the collection as well. Moreover, the reproduction of works of art in books and videotapes extends the group that benefits from the museum's collection beyond those who can actually visit the museum. Although it

is obviously appropriate to charge for the cost of producing such books or videotapes, adding a royalty charge to the price would discourage someone from seeing the art, even though they could do so without imposing any additional cost on the museum.

The case against charging admission fees and publication royalties is fully persuasive only when there is enough support from private contributions and government funds to maintain the appropriate level of museum activity. When these other sources of funds are inadequate, higher admission fees may be better than lower levels of spending.

Cash gifts from individuals and corporations account for approximately one-third of the annual operating budgets of the major 150 art museums, with about four-fifths of those funds coming from individuals. The tax deductibility of charitable gifts significantly increases the total dollar amount of such giving, and the increase in giving induced in this way is substantially more important than all direct government support for art museums.

Although charitable contributions are an important source of museum finance, the voluntary nature of charitable giving means that these funds are likely to be less than enough to support the appropriate level of museum activity. The key reason is that any individual can enjoy the museum's services without being a contributor. Although each contributor also enjoys the satisfaction of giving as well as the benefits of enhanced museum services, most of the benefit of an extra dollar in the museum's treasury goes to the large numbers of other museum visitors.

Because museums are such a great national treasure, it is tempting to hope that Washington will provide greater federal support in the future. But whatever the merits of the case for increased federal funding—and the traditional "economic" analysis indicates that they are considerable—direct federal support now accounts for less than 2 percent of the total operating budgets of the nation's private art museums. Our political tradition makes additional support from local governments and through the federal tax system more likely than increased direct funding from Washington, but the financial pressures currently on states and localities make significant increases unlikely.

Income from endowments now contributes about one-sixth of museums' total operating budgets. Museums have used an average payout rate of 6.4 percent in calculating the amount of their endowment that they spend. Some three-fourths of this income is spent on current operations and the rest on acquisitions.

U.S. political tradition makes additional support for art museums from local governments and through the federal tax system more likely than increased direct funding from Washington. But the financial pressures currently on states and localities make significant increases unlikely

Some simple calculations show that this current practice represents an unsustainably high rate of spending of endowment funds in most art museums. If the endowment income is not to decline over time as a fraction of total spending, the size of the total endowment must increase over time at the same rate as the operating budget. Because operating expenses rise with the level of wages, which have increased over the long term at about 2 percent a year more than prices, the growth of the endowment must exceed the rise in the general price level by about 2 percent a year.

Major universities with well-managed endowments invested in a combination of debt and equity securities calculate that over long periods of time, the real inflation-adjusted return on endowments averages only about 4 percent. Even if a museum's endowment is judged to be large enough in relation to current expenditures so that the endowment need only grow at 2 percent a year in real terms, the spending financed by the endowment should be limited to 2 percent plus the value of gifts and bequests to the endowment. Very few museums have the flow of endowment gifts and bequests that would justify spending as much as the 6 percent average payout rate that art museums as a whole now are taking.

As I listen to and talk with museum professionals, I conclude that although museums are doing a great deal to expand annual operating gifts from individuals and corporations, they are doing relatively less to increase major bequests and gifts to the endowment fund. By contrast, universities appear to do much more to attract very large gifts and bequests to be added to endowment capital.

One reason for the difference is that major universities are financially much larger than major museums and can justify the specialized professional staff needed to solicit major gifts and bequests. The only way for art museums to know if they could be successful in seeking such capital funds is to regard such a fund-raising project as an investment with an uncertain payoff, devoting funds to the project for several years to see if it repays the effort and expenditure.

Quantifying Trade-Offs

Museums rightly have a multiplicity of missions including not only the display of the collection but conservation, scholarly research, and public education. Understandably, staff members and trustees might generally believe that more of each of these activities would be better than less.

The desire to expand services is characteris-

tic of those who are responsible for all types of nonprofit organizations, including education, health care, welfare services, and religious organizations, as well as museums. From society's perspective, however, the expansion of each type of activity must be balanced against the real costs of doing so. If we step away from the nonprofit sector for a moment, we find that for most of the vast array of ordinary goods and services produced in our economy, the basic forces of supply and demand do a very good job of balancing the value of various products and services with their costs of production.

But in the nonprofit sector, the market cannot be counted on to achieve the correct level of spending on different types of activities. The mechanisms that society has created to supplement the market in support of nonprofit organizations also are far from perfect in balancing the costs and benefits of different activities. In some activities, too few resources are available (in the sense that additional spending would create benefits that exceed their costs), and in other areas the method of financing causes the volume of resources to be excessive.

Museum professionals and trustees must therefore recognize that they are unlikely ever to have enough funds to operate their institutions at the level of activity that could be justified in an ideal world. Instead, they must make difficult choices of what to do with the limited funds available. A museum cannot do more of everything; it can do more of one thing that it wants only by doing less of another. The key to good decision making is to see those trade-offs explicitly.

In many cases, it would help to quantify the trade-offs facing art museums. What will an extra (say) $50,000 a year buy? How many extra hours would it allow the museum to be kept open? Or, alternatively, how many students could be brought to the museum for a single visit or a series of visits? Or how many schoolteachers could be brought to the museum for a series of classes that would permit them to teach about art more effectively in the city's schools? Or how many members of a minority group that does not normally come to the museum could be brought in by a variety of outreach programs? Only by quantifying the choices and assessing what the explicit trade-offs are within the given budget can museums make well-reasoned choices.

In some cases, of course, quantification is easier than others. It might not be clear what a $50,000 program of advertising, transportation, and free admissions would do in terms of minority attendance. But a quantitative guess refined as experience accumulates is better than just a feeling about what *should* be done. It is even more difficult to quantify the effects of increased spending on conservation. Yet without some quantification, how can museums know whether funds are being well spent?

Art museum leaders must recognize that they are unlikely ever to have enough funds to operate their institutions at the level of activity that could be justified in an ideal world. Instead, they must make difficult choices of what to do with the limited funds available

Because art museum budgets are severely constrained, it is desirable to revisit two issues about the sources of funds for museums in this spirit of facing difficult trade-offs: the deaccessioning of items from the collection and the charging of admission.

The Question of Deaccessioning

Museum people have a natural reluctance to deaccession works of art from their collections. In addition to the loss of the work from the museum's own collection, there is concern that the painting or other object might no longer be available to the public in any museum or might even leave the country. Moreover, a work of art that goes from the expert hands of a museum curator to a private individual might not be cared for as well.

Although museum storerooms have many works of art that cannot currently be displayed because of inadequate space and that may not have been displayed for decades, curators argue that works that are currently unfashionable might well be of greater interest in the future. There is a concern, moreover, that selling objects from the collection may deter future gifts of works of art or may even deter cash contributions by prospective donors who come to regard the sale of the museum's art as an alternative source of cash for operating purposes.

In an ideal world—in which museums were adequately funded—these arguments might be fully persuasive. But in the actual second-best world in which museums are woefully underfunded, museum professionals have generally come to accept the sale of works of art from their collections as long as the receipts from those sales are restricted to purchasing new works of art for the collection.

Perhaps surprisingly, when works are deaccessioned, they are not always sold subject to restrictions that they may not be exported or that they must remain in the collection of a public museum. Imposing such legal restrictions would reduce the sale price for any object sold but would allay some of the concerns that museums have about their stewardship responsibilities.

Such restrictions that protected the care and public availability of deaccessioned works of art might also make museum professionals willing to use the funds from such sales for certain types of operating expenses. Expenditures on

the restoration or preservation of works of art in the collection may be seen as close substitutes for the acquisition of new works of art. Indeed, conservation of a work that is already in the museum's collection may socially be a more productive way of adding to the museum's usable collection, because it represents a virtual net addition to the world's stock of art rather than just a shift of ownership.

Funds spent on improving the security of the museum's collection (guards, electronic surveillance, and so on) or the internal climate of the museum (air conditioning, humidification, and the like) are similar in their effect to restoring and preserving works of art. Museums that see themselves as stewards of the world's art might find expenditures on restoration, preservation, and protection more worthwhile than expenditures on acquisitions.

Admission Charges Considered

I come finally to the problem of admission charges. I have already explained why economists would say that in an ideal world it would be appropriate to have no admission charge at all. Even when a charge is justified by the detrimental effect of additional visitors on the enjoyment of the museum by others, the level of the charge would ideally be set to reflect only this "congestion" effect and not with a view to raising revenue.

Museums must, however, live in a second-best world in which the lack of funding means that all of the museum's missions are served less well than would be ideal. There is too little conservation, opening hours are too restricted, too little is done to attract members of the public who normally do not come to the museum, too little is done to educate those who do come, and too few specialized exhibitions are presented for well-informed museum visitors.

Although an increase in admission charges would discourage some attendance, it would at a minimum permit the museum to serve its other missions more adequately. Museum charges are now quite low relative to what an individual would expect to pay for a similar amount of time spent at a concert or theater or sporting event.

Art museums have been reluctant to increase general admission charges, but they do impose extra fees for major traveling exhibitions with wide popular appeal, and the resulting revenue is seen as a significant contributor to annual budgets. Nevertheless, receipts from admission charges still finance only some 5 percent of museum operating budgets.

The decision of whether to raise admission charges should be based on a quantitative assessment of the likely results. How much would an extra dollar of admission charge reduce total attendance? How much additional revenue would be produced, taking into account the higher revenue from those who continue to come and the revenue lost from those who stop coming? What could the museum do with the extra revenue? What types of individuals would choose not to come if the admission charge were increased? Could special discounts for particular groups or particular times during the week eliminate most of the adverse effect on attendance while still producing extra revenue from high-income groups and visitors from out of town? Could some of the extra revenue be used to encourage attendance through public information programs designed to attract visitors or by supporting activities at the museum that bring in additional visitors? In this way, it might even be possible to increase total attendance while raising charges and net revenue. But even if that is not possible, the museum should face explicitly the trade-offs made possible by considering higher admission fees.

The conservation of works of art—like that of Giovanni Bellini's *Feast of the Gods*, undertaken by David Bull of the National Gallery of Art—is an investment for current and future publics to appreciate.

Although art museums are a small part of our economy, they are a vital part of our national life. Museum professionals rightly see themselves as the protectors of the treasures that our generation has inherited from the past, as the collectors of the creative activity of the current times, and as teachers who help the broad public know and appreciate these works of art.

Ordinary market forces cannot support an appropriate level of museum activities. This is recognized by the public's willingness to support museums through contributions of money and art and by the government's support through grants and through the special tax treatment of charitable gifts.

But unless there is a dramatic change in national priorities, art museums will continue to have budgets that are too small to pursue their many missions at socially appropriate levels. Museum leaders will therefore be forced to confront difficult trade-offs among competing objectives. □

Permanent Problem?

A Former Director Argues That Although Recession Accelerates The Search for Funds, Museums' Economic Problems are Endemic

By Thomas W. Leavitt

It's recession time again. In Middleboro, Mass., Adolf Arnold watched his accounts receivable shrink as his accounts payable expanded at his small industrial advertising agency. Finally, with a tear in his eye, he announced that the A & D Toy Train Village and Railway Museum would close its doors forever at the end of January 1991. Although his was not a nonprofit institution, he wasn't in it for the bucks. And just as well, for in the end, the bucks weren't there.

Arnold is not alone. All over the U.S., museum directors, development officers, and board members are scrambling to find new sources of income to replace those that are shrinking. For some of us, it's deja vu all over again, as the old philosopher put it. We remember the early 1980s, when the double whammy of a Reagan-inspired recession and a Reagan-led effort to reduce federal funding for museums forced us to look for "new" money from often chimerical sources.

Although congressional support then was able to deflect the effort to gut the budgets of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, museums of all sizes took a direct hit when the Community Education and Training Act program was eliminated—and with it, hundreds of federally funded museum positions. Janitors, photographers, bibliographers—good people doing good work were taken off the organizational table by a stroke of the presidential pen.

Susan Bertram's essay in the February 1983 issue of *Museum News* documented many of the consequences of those hard times and argued that in the future, "earned income" would become ever more important in museum financing.

Recessions bring little but bad news to the museum community. Eight years later, the cultural community faces similar challenges. Although museums now have a friend in the White House, we cannot predict what the consequences will be when Washington begins to try to solve the deficit burden. Meanwhile, the current recession reduces income from admissions, and fewer admissions mean museum store profits are lower; corporations faced with "downsizing" reduce their charitable contributions; and individuals without jobs simply lack the cash they would give to charities if they had it to give.

Those of us in Massachusetts are experiencing another double whammy today. Not only are the unemployment figures rising as the Massachusetts Miracle fades into history, but the new governor has proposed to gut the state arts council budget, which on a per-capita basis only three years ago put Massachusetts second in the nation in state support for the arts and humanities. Without direct support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, many institutions will cut programs, and others will reduce the number of hours each week they are open to the public. The state's cultural advocacy network has responded by reorganizing to strengthen its lobbying ability but is a year too late to be of much immediate help. Meanwhile, our major attendance-driven attractions—such as Plimoth Plantation and Old Sturbridge Village—are forced to make layoffs.

Unfortunately, there are no easy solutions to this and similar dilemmas around the U.S. Museums have little or nothing to do with the causes of recession and little control over how and when they come to an end. We are, with few exceptions, chronically undercapitalized, underbuilt, and understaffed. There is simply no easy way out.

In the earlier recession, some observers suggested that certain museums shift their audience focus so as to attract support from both inner-city minorities and young urban professionals (an interesting pairing). I suggest that in the intervening years, many institutions have done so—but these new audiences did not al-

Thomas W. Leavitt was director of the Museum of American Textile History in North Andover, Mass., from 1964 until April 1991.

ways bring other visitors with them, nor did they produce the funds required to overcome chronic fiscal anemia.

In the end, recessions may tend to accelerate the search for new sources of capital and operating funds. But the economic problems of museums are permanent and structural. That is the problem. The Fuller Museum of Art in Brockton, Mass., would be in trouble with or without a downswing in the economy; the Slater Mill Historic Site in Pawtucket, R.I., lacking the required endowment, has closed to the general public during winter months for years now; the Jones Museum of Glass and Ceramics in Douglas Hill, Maine, is alive only because of the continued generosity of its founder; and the Charles River Museum of Industry in Waltham, Mass., founded in 1980, has yet to muster the resources to open its doors on a full-time schedule.

In short, the current recession, like those before it, exacerbate latent conditions that are endemic to U.S. museums. Perhaps it is time for a full-fledged examination of the economic dimension of museums by disinterested authorities. □

Many institutions, including the Museum of American Textile History in North Andover, Mass., are searching for ways to deal with the current recession and its attendant challenges.

Conservation Cure

Here's Proof That—With Initiative—Even Small Museums Can Avert Conservation Disaster and Learn to Care for Their Collections

By Diane R. Kopec

Because they lack both sufficient resources and expertise, many small museums and historical societies seem to believe a conservation program is out of their reach. But the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine, has undertaken an ambitious conservation program that proves the opposite. With the consulting services of a professional conservator, grant funding, and a dedicated board and staff, we have averted a conservation disaster; with help, it is possible for other small institutions to carry out similar efforts.

The Abbe Museum, officially the Robert Abbe Museum of Stone Age Antiquities, was founded "to collect, preserve and interpret local Indian history." The objects in our collection are predominantly of stone, bone, pottery, basketry, skin, and other organic materials. The museum itself is an octagonal, Mediterranean-style structure built in 1927 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. It is constructed of masonry walls in which are set numerous large windows that give the museum an airy, sunny appearance. Although aesthetically pleasing, these structural features were responsible for a host of problems related to maintaining the stable environment required to house the collections the building was intended to protect.

The Maine State Museum, through its museum services program, joined with the Abbe Museum in a collaborative effort by providing the services of Madeleine Fang, an object conservator. Together, we began by commissioning a conservation survey in 1986 by Barbara Mangum, conservator at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. (The Maine Arts Commission, whose purpose is to support programs in the arts and cultural heritage of the state, funded the initial survey.) This opened our eyes to the problems we faced.

Following an examination of the museum—its environment, artifacts, materials, and methods employed for display and storage—Mangum submitted an extensive report of her findings and recommendations, citing eight problems as the most severe.

Relative humidity and mold. These were deemed the most critical problems. Mold, the result of high relative humidity inside the facility, was causing severe damage to the ethnographic materials, particularly clothing and basketry. Recommended relative humidity for these materials is in the 45 to 55 percent range with minimal daily fluctuations. By contrast, the relative humidity in our museum's exhibit room fluctuated between 25 percent and 90 percent and was more than 70 percent for much of the year.

Light. The light level in the exhibit room fluctuated throughout the year from 2,800 lux to as high as 4,400 lux. The ultraviolet content of the light was recorded as high as 400 mW/lumen. The recommended standard for organics ranges from 50 to 150 lux, depending on the type of material, with less than 75 mW/lumen ultraviolet content. Twenty-five lux maximum is sometimes given for the display of baskets and clothing with fugitive dyes.

The over-abundance of sunlight entering the many windows in the exhibit room caused brittleness and fading in many artifacts. In addition, the heat it generated—followed by cooling overnight—caused condensation to occur inside the display cases.

Insect and rodent infestation. Mice and insects had found the basketry storage areas, and flying squirrels entered the building through the cupola over the exhibit room and nested in a 19th-century birch-bark canoe. Pests had not only nibbled on objects but left behind debris, which attracted more insects.

Exhibit and storage methods and materials. Many objects on display did not have proper support or protection, and some came

Diane R. Kopec is director of the Abbe Museum in Bar Harbor, Maine. Objects Conservator Madeleine Fang, Maine State Museum, Augusta, and Curator Rebecca Cole-Will, Abbe Museum, also contributed to this article.

in direct contact with damaging materials. The birch-bark canoe, for example, was resting on its side and held in place by wire, a method of display that was distorting its shape.

Because of a shortage of storage space, artifacts were stacked in drawers on top of one another. To make matters worse, the exhibit storage furnishings are constructed mainly of oak, which emits acidic vapors. Exhibit labels and cloth were not acid-free; some had molded. Artifacts in storage were organized on Styrofoam trays, and staples, paper clips, and moth flakes were mixed in. In addition, many artifacts catalogued years ago had adhesive-backed labels.

Artifact handling. When the conservation program began, our staff had no more knowledge of conservation principles than other staffs of small institutions. Objects were usually handled with bare hands and occasionally were improperly supported.

Air quality. Dust, mold, and pollen spores are common problems, but we also must deal with sea salts, which have hygroscopic properties in certain environments. Deposited on artifacts, these can cause problems similar to the chloride problems usually associated with archaeological metals, bone, pottery, and stone.

The Abbe Museum—which is on the national historic register—has a unique architectural style. But the structure presented conservation nightmares, including problems with windows, gutters, and the museum's foundation.

Developing a Long-Range Plan

Once we knew what we faced, our next task was to develop a long-range plan. The five-year plan broke the work into three overlapping stages, each addressing a different level of need and priority: Stage I, "Macro and Micro Environments," dealt with correcting the museum's overall environment as well as the exhibit and storage cases. Stage II, "Training in Conservation Techniques," provided for staff training, and Stage III, "Treatment of Individual Objects," began the treatment program for the artifacts themselves.

Finding funds for our ambitious program, of course, was a crucial aspect of the planning process. Our 1986 operating budget did not even allow for the purchase of small items such as acid-free tissue, let alone recording hygrothermographs or major structural renovations. We investigated different types of state and federal funding sources, and because a significant portion of our plans in-

volved structural renovations, we applied to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission for renovation funding. Funding was made possible through the passage of a 1986 state bond issue. The museum's board of trustees allocated $10,000 from a special reserve account, and members matched this funding. The federal Institute of Museum Services' conservation program also provided grants to initiate and maintain the program.

The first year of the conservation program, 1988, was devoted solely to Stage I, dealing with the facility itself and its exhibit and storage areas. (Conserving individual objects to put them back into an unsuitable environment would have been counterproductive.) Major structural improvements were necessary to correct problems involving humidity, ultraviolet radiation, visible light, and pest control. The obvious solution to the humidity problem—a central heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning system—could not be installed because of the high cost, so we opted for a more labor-intensive system of controlling the humidity: We sealed moisture sources, dehumidified the overall environment, and converted the exhibit units into sealed microenvironments. Sealing out the sources of humidity involved correcting the foundation, gutters, roof, and masonry walls and installing weatherization. Because of the costs, these improvements were spread out over five years.

Although large windows give the museum a sunny, airy feeling, they also let in far too much light—causing brittleness and fading of artifacts. Conservation measures successfully reduced ultraviolet and lux readings.

The most critical structural problem, the foundation, was scheduled for the first year. The basement, constructed of concrete block walls and a concrete floor, reflected our location in an area of natural springs. Water ran across the basement floor, and mold grew on the walls. Salamanders loved the place.

Our architect, provided by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission grant, not only helped the staff determine structural problems and priorities but also wrote specifications for the contractors. To correct the wet basement, the contractor excavated the entire basement and installed two sets of pipes around the perimeter—one to drain away underground water and a second to carry water from the gutters away from the building. He coated foundation walls with Thoraseal and a tar product. The basement floor was pitched for drainage. Gravel and plastic sheeting were laid over the floor and a new cement floor laid over that. Now when water enters, it runs through the gravel to a drain in the floor while the plastic and new cement layer keep the moisture contained. Interior walls were insulated and covered with wallboard.

During the first year of the program, we also weatherized the museum to keep moisture and pests out. In addition to glazing and caulking windows and doors, we replaced screen doors with glass ones and insulated the trap door of the cupola. Now it can be opened during hot days with a pulley system and closed the remainder of the year. The added bonus is keeping squirrels out.

To further combat the pest problem, we sealed all openings where mice could enter, set mousetraps with plain cotton for bait (cotton won't attract insects, but mice use it for nest building), and set sticky insect traps in corners, on window sills, and in storage cupboards. Now we can monitor the kinds of insects in the museum as well as catch them. We searched for an insect trap with no attractant to reduce the number of garden pests that normally would not enter the museum. Samples of trapped insects now are sent to an entomologist at a nearby university for identification.

Once the basement was renovated and the building weatherized, we could run heaters in the exhibit room and basement during winter to keep the humidity at approximately 50 percent. We have electric heat, so the additional cost of running heaters was a concern, but we found that unused rooms only had to be kept above freezing. In the summer, when we are open to the public, we run dehumidifiers in both locations. Because of the volume of visitors in the small exhibit room and constant opening of the thermal glass doors, however, the dehumidifiers cannot maintain the proper

humidity on wet days—hence the need for microenvironments. We also added fans because the exhibit room becomes warm with dehumidifiers running.

In the second year of the project, we repaired the copper gutters, which were riddled with holes. Because we are on the historic register, we had to stick with copper. To contain the cost, we relined the gutters and repaired downspouts when possible. Two structural renovations, retiling the ceramic roof and repairing cracks in the masonry, still remain and are scheduled for future years.

We investigated a number of different methods for reducing ultraviolet (UV) rays and visible light, taking several factors into consideration—availability, effectiveness, and aesthetics. Fortunately, the method we chose to reduce ultraviolet light also reduces heat loss, moisture penetration, and insect entry, in addition to providing extra security. Magnetic storm windows with UV-absorbing Plexiglass, installed on the inside of the exhibit-room windows, have reduced UV levels to 50 mW/lumen and serve as glazing in the winter. We also installed Solarscreen shades in front of the storm windows to reduce visible light levels. We chose shades for their effectiveness in reducing total and UV light levels, reflectance of solar heat, and see-through capabilities. The shades have reduced the lux reading in filtered sunlight to approximately 175.

Now we regularly monitor temperature, humidity, UV, and light levels. We purchased various meters for this purpose: a Crawford UV monitor, a regular camera light meter, recording hygrothermographs for each room, dial hygrometers for inside each exhibit case, and a fan-driven psychrometer for calibrating the hygrothermographs and hygrometers.

Even as facility problems were being corrected, we began working on exhibit and storage cases. Although some of these problems were corrected in the first year, some cases have taken three years to stabilize. First we vacuumed all storage cases and scrubbed them with Lysol to kill mold. To reduce the transmission of acids and water from the oak cabinets and masonite support boards, we sealed the insides of all storage areas and cupboards with a shellac-based primer before painting. While the furnishings aired, we cleaned the baskets with soft sable brushes and a dental oral evacuator, a substitute vacuum cleaner capable of maintaining low suction over long periods of time. We went through each storage drawer and removed moth flakes, paper clips, staples, paper, and Styrofoam trays. Each artifact was placed in a 100 percent polyethylene bag; holes were punched in each bag to avoid the problems of condensation that can occur in plastic wrap. We removed adhesive labels from artifacts with suitable solvents and replaced them with acid-free tags.

To maintain 50 percent relative humidity in the cases—and to buffer the artifacts against ambient humidity fluctuations—we also installed a silica gel system. The area under the masonite inserts in the cases provided a perfect space for housing the gel. To improve air circulation between the gel and the objects in the cases, we drilled holes in the surface of the inserts. The inserts were covered with fabric that had been washed with a nonionic detergent and deionized water to remove sizing and additives. All artifacts were cleaned prior to returning them to the clean cases. Finally, new exhibit labels were printed on acid-free paper and placed in the cases.

The silica gel system has worked well in the sealed cases. During the first summer, we needed to recondition the gel several times as the cases and artifacts were acclimatized. During the second summer, however, only one reconditioning was necessary.

Positive Results

We initiated Stages II and III during the second year of the program. Our curator has attended courses on conservation at the Smithsonian Institution and has learned a great deal from reading and discussing the problems with our consultant. For Stage III, treatment of individual objects, we made a list of high-priority items and the consulting conservator wrote treatment proposals for these objects. For the past two summers, an intern from the Buffalo State Museum Art Conservation Department in New York has worked with the conservator on treating these objects. This has saved the expense of sending objects to a laboratory.

The overall results of our museum's conservation program have been positive—and all have occurred without the input of large amounts of capital. Our experience demonstrates that small museums with limited budgets can initiate a successful conservation program.

The support of the funding agencies has put the Abbe Museum at the conservation level of some large institutions, but it has done more than that. Now we *know* that we are taking good care of our collections. Although there is no conservator on staff, we recognize the problems and feel confident in our collections procedures. Finally, the program has served as a springboard for expanding our constituency and programs and for developing plans that address the future needs of the museum. □

Moving Target

Before Jumping Onto the Interactive Multimedia Bandwagon, It Would Be Wise to Consider the Constraints—and Opportunities

By Ann Mintz

As recently as 10 years ago, the visual and aural capabilities of computers affordable to museums were limited to text, simple line drawings, and primitive beeps. Today, however, off-the-shelf image processing equipment performs functions undreamed of even in the early 1980s. Personal computers can display full-color photographs and graphics, even animation and high-fidelity sound—all of which make up what is often called interactive multimedia.

Interactive multimedia programs are produced for many purposes: Electronic encyclopedias are used in schools, homes, and libraries; kids use multimedia programs to play video and computer games, corporations to train employees, shoppers to find their way around enormous malls. For museums, interactive multimedia offers exciting options for exhibits, providing unparalleled access to enormous amounts of information without forcing visitors to wade through the information that does not interest them.

New interactive multimedia technology is appearing almost daily, but the interactive videodisk is the only such technology currently on the market that offers the kind of flexibility and video quality museums require. These computer-controlled disks provide full-motion color footage or still images, and two independent, high-quality sound tracks. Computer-generated text can be layered over the imagery on the disks. With different programming, a single disk can provide many layers of experience. The programming is flexible, but the disk itself is mastered much like a long-playing record. Once it is pressed, it cannot be changed any more than a record album can, although the segments can be organized in different ways.

There are at least four areas in which interactive multimedia programs present special challenges to museums:

Context. A program designed for a museum does not stand alone. It supplements other elements of an exhibit—whether paintings, ethnographic collections, dinosaur skeletons, or interactive mechanical devices. A museum multimedia program is most effective if it complements other aspects of the exhibit in which it is placed. It is further strengthened if it refers explicitly to its surroundings.

Museum visitors vary in age, education, interests, and learning styles. Some choose to focus on the electronic media while computerphobes ignore them. But for many visitors, interactive multimedia enhances other learning experiences.

For example, a microcomputer installation at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto focuses on the Canadian painters known as the Group of Seven. The installation is designed to deepen the visitor's appreciation of the paintings. The displays are stark black and white, based on line drawings, not full-color high resolution photographs. They complement the paintings; they in no way compete with them.

The computers can be used in a variety of ways: to compare and contrast selected pairs of paintings, learn about the lives of the painters, find out when and where they worked. Visitors even can write their own comments in an electronic guest book. The information design is complex and sophisticated, but the technology is simple and affordable, based on ordinary personal computers.

The Museum Education Consortium has a similar goal. This group of seven art museums is developing interactive videodisks for museum use (see *This Videodisc Venture Tackles an Ambitious Topic: Impressionism,* September/October 1990). Susan Stedman, executive director, says, "It really is a hidden attempt to get people to learn how to look at art."

An exhibit on water use at the Museum of Science in Boston includes a videodisk that concentrates on policy issues, placing the visitor in the shoes of the mayor of a town with a water shortage. This was a relatively inex-

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Opposite: Line drawings in an interactive multimedia program complement, rather than compete with, the paintings of the Group of Seven collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto. Interactive multimedia is designed to enhance visitors' appreciation of the art.

pensive project, using museum staff to portray the townspeople who respond to whatever action the visitor takes in an effort both to solve the water shortage and get reelected.

Content. Many educational programs have been developed for the home and school computer markets. Although education is the primary goal of most museum programs, this does not mean that a program designed for school or library use is easily adaptable to the museum setting.

Computer games designed for an arcade or for home use must be entertaining and challenging, but not necessarily educational. In fact, computer game designers report that the word "education" is the kiss of death in the consumer marketplace. Although it is true that these games can improve hand-eye coordination, it is difficult to make a case for split-second reaction time as a significant educational goal.

Appropriateness, then, is key. The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, Calif., uses interactive multimedia as an information resource for its visitors. People can enjoy the museum's superb collection of Greek vases or medieval manuscripts, then explore the topic further with interactive videodisks on each topic. The manuscript disk is particularly successful. Visitors can select "mini-movies" that demonstrate the techniques of medieval scribes, artists, and bookbinders; explain the symbolism that was crystal clear to medieval readers but often is obscure to us; describe the types of manuscripts in the Getty's collection; and provide in-depth information about five manuscripts. This disk is easy to use, with a "host" who explains exactly how to interact with it.

Ideally, a museum program should be useable by a heterogeneous audience. Because interactive multimedia can be expensive, it is difficult to justify the expense if only a minute subset of the institution's audience is served. *Earth Over Time,* a videodisk produced for the Interactive Video Science Consortium, addresses this issue by providing experiences for a variety of learning styles (see article below). Visitors can solve a puzzle that teaches them about plate tectonics and continental drift, ex-

This Video Program—a Cooperative Venture—is Both Playful and Powerful

By Genine Amada Tillotson

Designing an interactive video exhibit for 15 science and technology museums around the world was the task of the team that designed *Earth Over Time,* an interactive multimedia program for children between the ages of 10 and 12.

The sponsoring organization, the Interactive Video Science Consortium, wanted to excite museum visitors in a number of ways. They envisioned a video-based simulation that would engage museum visitors in group debate as part of learning about the environment. They wanted a powerful way to explain the concept of plate tectonics and how the movement of the earth has influenced the development of land masses and life forms around the world. And they hoped for the playfulness and immediate excitement of a video game.

In *Earth Over Time*'s first activity, "Save the Beach," a simulated newscast reports on the demise of the coastline of Oceanville, which has been ravaged by hurricanes, and notes that a vote on how to save Oceanville's beaches is being held. Museum viewers are invited to "talk" with residents of the community, each of whom favors a different solution to the problem of shoreline erosion. Museum visitors can telephone each resident to hear how the erosion-saving methods work, and they can vote, using a touch-screen ballot.

After the vote, a newscast takes the viewer into the future and reports on how the selected solution fared over time. The activity is short and direct. Much more could be said about the complex issue of coastal erosion, but we kept in mind the attention span of a visitor in an action-packed museum setting. The design is structured so that museum visitors can learn something about coastal erosion, even if they make only one or two decisions. If they are willing to invest more time, they can see a more global view of the problem by comparing and contrasting the different solutions.

In researching the way people interact with *Earth Over Time,* we discovered an interesting correlation between museum visitors' extended interest in "Save the Beach" and the program's physical setting. In a museum where visitors can sit down during the simulation, 71 percent watched the initial news broadcast and began some line of inquiry. In a museum with no seating available, only 19 percent of museum visitors began some line of inquiry after the initial newscast.

This shows that a comfortable, quiet setting can encourage an extended stay at the program. Of course, museums of all types should provide such a setting if they want viewers to participate in a "full experience" simulation such as "Save the Beach." This might prove troublesome, however, because fewer viewers will have ac-

Genine Amada Tillotson is senior designer and producer at Digital Techniques, Inc., Burlington, Mass., which produced Earth Over Time.

plore multiple points of view surrounding land-use issues, or use a simulated scalpel or microscope to investigate the ocean floor.

The Franklin Institute Science Museum in Philadelphia has gone one step further with a museumwide computer network that offers information designed for seven categories of museum visitors: adults, children, preschoolers, and four groups of teachers.

User interface. The way the user interacts with the equipment is another area that presents a special challenge to museums. How is the program started, stopped, interrupted? How does the visitor communicate with the program, and vice versa?

To put it simply, a museum multimedia program must be easy to learn. The technology should be "transparent," interfering as little as possible with the museum experience. Visitors often "graze" in a museum, glancing at a display in a cursory manner and then moving on. There is a small window of time during which a visitor decides whether to pay closer attention. Visitors become frustrated if they cannot learn to control a multimedia program, so the ideal interface must be understood quickly. Feedback also is important; the program should make it clear to visitors that their commands have been received and are being acted on.

Many museum visitors will be frustrated by computer commands that are familiar only to "tekkies." Even when the commands are clear, unfriendly interfaces are surprisingly common. Take, for example, the program controlled by words that are unreadable to anyone with less-than-perfect vision or demand facility with a "mouse"—the desktop gadget that controls the pointer on a computer screen.

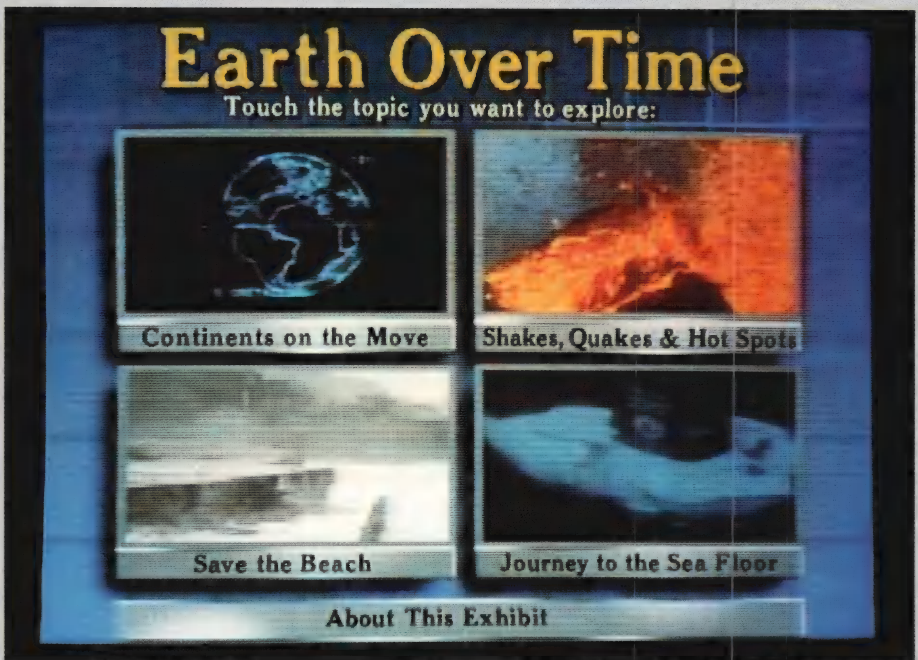
Museums have begun to experiment with ease of use and individualized experiences. The National Museum of American History's ambitious *Information Age* and The Franklin Institute Computer Network both make use of bar-coded cards to personalize the experience for each visitor. The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., plans to match each visitor with a Holocaust victim of the same age and sex; the visitor will use a bar-coded card to

cess to the system, and traffic flow can be a problem.

Two other activities, "Time Slider" and "The Continental Puzzle," merge the excitement of a video game with the concept of plate tectonics (the movement of land masses, or plates, to form continents).

In another activity, "Journey to the Sea Floor," we used existing video footage from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution to reproduce the experience of taking a miniature submarine to the East Pacific Rise. Various on-screen tools are provided for visitors to examine this region a mile and one-half under the ocean. As with "Save the Beach," each selection can be watched independently—and something can be learned. Any item may be examined in random order, allowing museum visitors freedom to explore.

In the final two activities, "Volcanoes and Earthquakes Around the World" and "Explore the Hawaiian Volcanoes," short, suspense-building videos depict such events as the eruption of Mt. St. Helens and the creation of Surtsey off the coast of Iceland. The journalistic approach maintains viewer interest, and menu choices and a movie controller give museum visitors a high degree of control.



Menus guide visitors through the "activities" of *Earth Over Time*, a multimedia program produced for 15 science and technology museums in the Interactive Video Science Consortium.

Two New Technologies Offer Even More Programming Options

Palenque, an interactive video program about an ancient Mayan site, will make its public debut in museums. It is one of the first to use a new form of technology known as digital video interactive.

Although the technology available to museum users of interactive multimedia is much more sophisticated today than just a few years ago (see main article beginning on page 64), two new options soon will be available.

Digital video interactive, or D.V.I., will display and manipulate full-color moving pictures on a mid-sized personal computer. All the images will be stored in the computer's memory and displayed on demand. *Palenque*, an extraordinarily sophisticated program developed by Kathy Wilson of New York's Bank Street College of Education, was designed to make use of D.V.I.'s unique capabilities. A "surrogate travel" program, it simulates a visit to Palenque, a classic Mayan site, including a wealth of ancillary information. *Palenque*'s users can explore the rain forest, visit a museum of Mayan art, learn about hieroglyphs, even select images for a personal photo album. Although designed for home use, it will make its public debut in museums.

Another emerging technology is called compact disk interactive, or C.D.I. More flexible and affordable than videodisk, C.D.I. is scheduled for launch this year. The first museum application already is under development for the Muséo Amparo Puebla, a museum of indigenous Mexican history currently under construction in Puebla, Mexico. Twenty-eight C.D.I. kiosks located throughout the museum will place the Amparo's collections in cultural and cross-cultural contexts; games, timelines, and other interpretive material will be available in Spanish, English, French, and Japanese.—*A.M.*

learn the fate of his or her "twin." This kind of individualized experience is impossible without the use of information technology.

Pattern of Interaction. A museum program must attract and hold visitors' attention. Because the window of opportunity to entice a visitor is short, a program should offer immediate satisfaction. Complex, multibranched menus can offer too many choices. As a rule, visitors should reach their chosen subprograms after making no more than three choices. Otherwise, they may become lost in the computer's changing screens or abandon the effort before reaching their destination. It also is important to allow people to change their minds and leave a selection before it is completed.

Museum multimedia programs are usually not designed exclusively for extended interaction, especially in museums that serve large audiences. A good, short multimedia experience will serve more people. Still, an effective museum multimedia program should permit a visitor to explore more facets of the program, if other people are not waiting.

It can be difficult to take the first steps into the complex universe of interactive multimedia. But keep this fact in mind: Although some familiarity with the technology is necessary, a degree of technological naiveté might actually be an advantage. Computer-based exhibit components are intended for museum visitors, not software engineers, and programs designed by experts do not always serve the needs of the general public.

It is all too easy for experts to forget that technology is a means, not an end. It should support the developmental process, not drive it. As James R. Blackaby wrote in the July/August 1988 *Museum News*, "The point of filling the refrigerator with food is to make good meals, not to marvel at the ability of the refrigerator." Interactive multimedia can help make "good meals"—effective, captivating exhibits that serve their visitors well. □

Take a Long Look

An Ambitious Labeling Project Aims to Satisfy the Educator's Agenda and The Public's Curiosity By Encouraging Visitors to Spend More Time Looking at Art

A man in animal costume sits at center stage, his enlarged profile reflected by a mirror with one missing light bulb. At lower left, a young woman attaches claws to a dancer's toe shoes. At right, a girl in yellow holds a cat's mask and a straw hat, unaware that three shadowy figures are advancing behind her. What is going on?

So reads the first paragraph of the wall label for Peter Milton's painting *The Rehearsal* in the 20th-century gallery of the Currier Gallery of Art in Manchester, N.H. It typifies the new labels going up to accompany the museum's permanent collection and takes as its starting point a direct response to the questions uppermost in many visitors' minds. (We know, because we asked them.) Once the label provides answers—or ways to think about answering—visitors are willing to spend more time looking.

That's the point. Longer looking time is the goal of the labeling project at the Currier Gallery, a 60-year-old art museum housed in a Renaissance-style palazzo. The museum is endowed with a select group of masterpieces of European and American painting and sculpture from the 13th century to the present; it also holds objects of American decorative arts of the past 300 years.

Before 1989, the museum's labels provided identification only (four lines typed on index cards). Label writing fell to the director, the curator, and a staff of between four and six people. This changed when, as a newly hired educator, I was given responsibility for providing labels with the cooperation of the director and curator. A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts enabled the institution to hire a part-time research assistant for one year to help with the project.

We began by asking a series of questions:

- *About the institution's many adult and college-aged visitors*. What kinds of information do they find interesting and useful? What kinds of questions do they ask? What sort of interpretive aids are available to them?
- *About my own favorite museums and galleries*. Why do I like them? What kinds of interpretive aids do they offer? How, if at all, do they increase my understanding of what I am looking at?
- *About the abundant literature on labeling and signage*. Why and how does interpretive material increase the average length of a museum visit?
- *About the different tools for interpretation*. What are the pros and cons of lectures, tours, labels, orientation audiovisual films, interactive video screens, and brochures? And what about the so-called Golden Rules (to which there are always exceptions): an 80-word maximum length for labels; an average visitor attention span of 30 seconds; and the visitor's preference for interpretive audiovisual aids over written materials. Finally, how do we harmonize interpretive aids with the architecture of the museum—a dignified, modestly sized three-story granite building with generous sunlit galleries flanking a mosaic-tiled courtyard?

Nancy Tieken is former director of education at the Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, N.H.

Answers to these questions began to take shape after we spent time walking through the galleries and becoming acquainted with the collection, the guards, and the visitors. As we talked, we began to define what would become the goal for the project: to enable visitors to look at objects in the collection with more purpose and more understanding of what they were seeing.

If we could provide clues on how to look—and a broad context to describe the who, what, when, where, and why pertinent to the artwork—then we hoped that visitors could make their own discoveries and feel a personal connection to a given object.

Within the framework of this goal, we designed this system of responsibility: The research assistant prepared object files on each artwork (using curatorial files and the scholarly literature) and wrote a rough draft; I then condensed and wrote what I felt were engaging and informative labels. This text then went to the director and curator for comments and was returned to me for refinement. If necessary, they would take a second look, after which I wrote the final version.

The labels, then, would read with one "voice," and visitors who cared to use them could feel as if they were being treated to a personal gallery tour. Finally, I formatted and printed the final text using a Macintosh computer and laser printer, and the assistant mounted and installed the new label in the gallery.

Determining Label Content

What should a visitor know about a work of art? What does a visitor *want* to know? I hoped to satisfy both the educator's agenda and the viewer's curiosity.

By giving frequent tours of the collections, I learned more about questions visitors had. I was continually surprised to be asked for infor-

By Nancy Tieken

Opposite: Crafting labels for such Currier Gallery gems as Jacob van Ruisdael's *Egmond-on-the-Sea* (shown in detail) meant predicting and answering questions visitors might have when they stand before the work of art.

mation I'd not even thought about: "What do the numbers on the label mean?" "Is the frame original?" "Why didn't the artist sign his name on the front of the painting?" "How long did it take to make the tapestry?"

These are interesting points and provide a necessary dose of reality for art historians. Does the average visitor really care with whom Matisse studied? Or which artists influenced Joos van Cleve?

To balance what I considered essential context with information that interested viewers, we often asked random visitors what they wanted to know about a particular artwork. Their interests often determined the content of the lead paragraph of the label. For example, although I was interested in why the corners of our Tiepolo *Apotheosis of Hercules* were unpainted (the work was an oval *modello* for a ceiling commission), four visitors independently wanted to know the story line, which subsequently became the subject of the lead paragraph.

After 15 drafts of a label for Jacob van Ruisdael's *Egmond-on-the-Sea*, it became clear that trial and error as much as planning played an important part in developing a workable system for label writing. From direct observation, general knowledge of the field, and curatorial research, I first produced the following text: "The majesty of a weather-worn dead tree gives this modest landscape a sense of grandeur which transcends the subject itself. It was painted by a master of Dutch landscape, Jacob van Ruisdael, when he was 20 years old. The tree has as much character and individuality as a portrait, and on closer examination, it is not entirely dead; sprouts of new growth show green against the silvered trunk."

Reactions from the director and curator included comments such as these: "'Sense of grandeur'? Not to me. I see a tree and a town, but mainly sky. Look again." "Tree as portrait? Wrong. It's a type." "Delete 'dead' and 'modest' from first line."

A rewrite and further responses eventually led to this result: "A weather-worn elm tree dominates the view of one of Ruisdael's favorite subjects—the countryside surrounding Egmond-on-the-Sea, a town not far from his native Haarlem. The motif of an ancient tree sprouting new leaves appears much earlier in western art as a Christian symbol for death and resurrection. And it was to become a popular 19th-century motif suggesting the sublime and romantic qualities of nature. In this picture, however, Ruisdael may use the tree for another reason—to emphasize the contrast between the untamed beauty of the natural world and the man-made order of the town in the background." This and three more paragraphs were printed in 14-point type on gray paper and mounted at eye level.

Visitors Talk Back

To gauge visitors' reactions to the new labels, we installed a comment book at the entrance to the gallery and asked people to "Tell Us What You Think." We added, "Your comments are important to us and to the success of the project."

Here are a few comments that appeared in the visitor's book: "An excellent idea. It was like having a miniature tour with an art historian. I hope more museums do it." "We liked the labels, especially because the large printing makes it easier for older eyes to see." "I don't like labels, so I didn't read them." "The label made me really look at the Ruisdael painting."

With more than 100 labels installed, one comment in particular sums up what we had set out to achieve: "Totally radical. Since each visitor cannot be supplied with a personal docent, these labels are the bridge to accessibility. They give information and pleasure to those who are accustomed to visiting museums and also to those who do not customarily attend. That serves to renew and expand the audiences of the art world."

Now, errors of fact and new, updated information based on the latest scholarship occasionally leads us to rewrite some of the labels. For example, a nun suggested that the label accompanying a 13th-century Tuscan *Madonna and Child* implied the panel itself was an object of worship, which she reminded us would have been a sin of idolatry. While she was in my office, we reworded the sentence for a new label, to make clear that the painting was a means for inspiring the worshipper to pray to Mary and Christ. I enjoy making corrections while visitors are standing in my office; it gives them the sense that they are making a valuable contribution to the museum.

Now that the label project is over, I intend to compile more hard evaluation data. Our random samples show visitors spending between 90 seconds and four minutes before a given work, but more samples are needed. Informal but convincing proof that the labels help people see can be had by watching a visitor look back and forth and back again from object to text to object.

I also will keep searching for ways to make the Currier labels even more interactive, to provide an ongoing dialogue between the visitor, scholar, and staff—a conversation that will continue to grow richer over time. □

A Decade of Service

For 10 Years, the Museum Assessment Programs Have Responded To the Needs of a Changing Field and Supported Emerging Museums

The Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyo., received its MAP I (institutional assessment) grant in 1985. The museum is one of more than 1,900 institutions that have participated in the Museum Assessment Programs since their inception in 1981.

A review of the most recent decade of U.S. museum development provides a dramatic introduction to the determination, creativity, and vitality of museum professionals and volunteers. Although differences over time beget differences in the realities confronting museums, the goal of preserving and sharing has not been lost. In fact, the ability of museums to be responsible custodians of world heritage has improved in the past 10 years. The challenge for the professional community is to seek new ways to reexamine and redefine how museums deal with current realities.

The four forces of change outlined in the 1984 AAM report *Museums for a New Century* are central to the discussion that engages the field: The proliferation of voices and participatory decision making, both internally and externally, is having an impact on the way museums are organized and managed; coming to terms with cultural pluralism has affected the way museums collect and interpret; the upheaval in education is requiring museums to reassess their role as communicators of ideas and information to the public; and joining the Information Age has expanded the knowledge available from museum collections and improved their ability to incorporate multiple points of view.

Similarly, four organizing principles shape the way the Museum Assessment Programs (MAP) help museums cope with the forces of change. MAP assists museums in improving their programs and operations. Through self-study and peer review, the program identifies museum strengths and weaknesses as reflected by current professional standards and documents areas that need improvement. It also encourages long-range institutional planning and

supports efforts to obtain funding from public and private sources to implement plans. MAP allows museums to deal effectively with change and meet the demands placed on them by the public.

Over the past 10 years, the expectation that museums have solid, thoughtful plans has increased, and there is an evolving sophistication of what the planning process entails. Museums must now carefully review their missions, analyze current operations and the environment in which they exist, develop realistic goals and strategies, and consider how they will develop the resources required to implement the plan. MAP continues its role in stimulating planning and recently published *Shaping the Museum: The MAP Institutional Planning Guide*. With this publication as a starting point, museum people who are already engaged in planning may acquire new insights into the process, and those who have only considered planning can gain the confidence to begin.

For small museums, MAP has created awareness of professional standards and motivated staff and board members to implement new programs and projects. Medium and large museums use MAP to focus on refining existing plans, policies, and procedures, and to leverage additional funding.

In addition to aiding in institutional planning, MAP was created to support the field's efforts to obtain assistance from private and public funding sources. MAP has had a positive impact on successful grantsmanship and the ability of museums to achieve AAM Accreditation. The program's success also can be seen in the wide variety of opportunities that have emerged to serve museums on both the national and state level. The Congress of Illinois Historical Societies and Museums, for example, began pre-MAP in 1988 to help relatively new museums assess and define their practices. The Maryland Historical and Cultural Museum Assistance Program and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, like several other state organizations, began offering grants to museums to implement the recommendations from their MAP reports as well as providing the funds for others to conduct their own pre-MAP assessment. Some state museum associations have modified the MAP materials and self-study format to provide other kinds of new services to their members. The Association of Indiana Museums is currently developing a survey of museums in the state utilizing the MAP self-study questionnaire. As Lamont J. Hulse, project manager, said in his request to use the MAP materials, "It seems senseless to reinvent the wheel, when your materials are . . . proven."

On the national level, MAP served as the model for the Conservation Assessment Program developed by the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. MAP

In July 1989, the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., received a MAP II grant for collections management assessment. The assessment helps staff members, trustees, and volunteers develop collections-related priorities and activities.

also has had an influence on the international museum community and serves as a model for other countries looking for successful ways to provide technical assistance to their museums.

A third element in MAP's original design was to provide a basis upon which the museum profession can assess the needs of the museum community. Managing a national service that evaluates the total operations of U.S. museums provides a unique vantage point from which to view the changing needs of the field. As a consequence, MAP has strengthened AAM's ability to serve museums by providing new programs (such as the Technical Information Service) and to broaden professional collaboration and the distribution of information beyond its membership.

Together, the federal Institute of Museum Services (I.M.S., which funds MAP) and AAM have taken the lead in responding to the changing needs of the field and supporting the development of emerging museums. When it originated in 1981, MAP provided one assessment to review all areas of museum management and operations. Ten years later, MAP consists of two program components and is developing a third. The need for additional assistance in the areas of collections policy, documentation, and preservation became evident in 1984, which led to the development of the Collections Management Assessment (MAP II). MAP II is an additional tool to develop collections policies and plans and better enable museums to care for and document their collections. Collectively, MAP I and MAP II address the needs of museum management and internal, behind-the-scenes operations.

In the late 1980s, the need arose to help museums become more focused on serving the public. The need to assess how external factors affect the success of museums has become more pressing. The Public Dimension Assessment (MAP III) reviews a museum from the outside in—the public perception, public experience, and public involvement. Currently in its pilot phase, MAP III reflects on the various ways a museum touches the public, including the public's awareness and image of the institution, the quality of the public's experience, and the degree of community participation in the museum.

The final MAP principle is to involve the museum profession in a program of self-improvement and create a climate of self-evaluation that will demonstrate the commitment of museums nationwide to serving both present and future generations. The level of participation, both by museums and professionals who serve as surveyors, is evidence of the eagerness for self-improvement in the museum profession. In 10 years, MAP has provided more than 2,600 assessments, using the skills and commitment of 700 museum professionals.

Because of their comprehensiveness, MAP's materials and processes have been used to train graduate students in museum studies programs. The Cooperstown Graduate Program, for example, has incorporated the MAP model into its curriculum by designing assessments of nearby museums as a part of the student's comprehensive exam.

For middle and senior-level professionals who serve as surveyors, MAP offers a unique challenge that furthers professional development and leadership skills. As the primary agents of change within the museum community, MAP surveyors know that a MAP survey is demanding work. It is a professional responsibility that extends both before and after the intensive on-site survey. The surveyor's reward is not the modest honorarium but being part of a process that raises standards and improves museum performance. MAP surveyors frequently acknowledge that they return from a survey with fresh insights into their own institutions as well as with some reassurance that others are grappling with similar problems.

The challenge of maintaining credibility in a constantly changing environment is one that faces all institutions. To operate with success requires an openness and ability to go beyond a perceived "fixed" position and take advantage of the opportunities that abound. What is needed is the thoughtful, dynamic commitment on the part of individual leaders who have a vision and who are capable of articulating and sharing that vision. When there is no vision or when change is neglected, failure results.

It is no accident that each of the MAP assessments have evolved in the sequence they have been offered. Each of these components reflects a successive wave of need that has been met by responsive leadership and the support and participation of all sectors of the museum community. Those who deserve special recognition for their part in guiding MAP include I.M.S. and its National Museum Services Board, the AAM Council, individual MAP surveyors and their institutions, and the Bay and McDermott foundations.

The strength of that leadership has been defined by its ability to target the specific needs and develop programs like MAP that foster increased collaboration, collegial problem solving, and team effort. *—Kim Igoe, Susan Graziano, Reneé Ater, Avery Beeson, Mary Kinnecome*

Deserving Diversions

These Choice Cultural Offerings (and Many Others) Await AAM Members Who Are Joining Their Professional Colleagues in Denver

By Nina G. Taylor

While planning your schedule for the 1991 AAM annual meeting—mapping it out to the millisecond to take advantage of all the professional opportunities—don't forget to leave some time to visit the area's museums. Here is just a sampling of what will be on view:

At the **Colorado Springs Fine Art Center**, *Images of Penance, Images of Mercy: Santos and Ceremonies of the Hispanic Southwest (1860–1910)* presents religious folk art items from northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. Created during the 19th century by Hispanic artists, the santos filled the need in Roman Catholic churches and homes for devotional images. Most of the images are carvings and sculptures that represent events during Christ's passion and crucifixion; some were used in the annual Holy Week enactments and other religious ceremonies throughout the year. Also on view at the center is *Folk Treasures of Mexico: Highlights from the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collection.*

Check out **KidsPort** when you're at Denver's Stapleton International Airport. Located in Terminal C, KidsPort is operated by the **Children's Museum of Denver**. Not only does it offer traveling families a place to release some pent-up energy but also the opportunity to learn from interactive exhibits. *Where in the World Am I?* is a geography and world travel

Nina G. Taylor is editorial assistant of Museum News.

The Holy Family—created from wood, water-based paints, and gesso by Jose Benito Ortega—is part of *Images of Penance, Images of Mercy: Santos and Ceremonies of the Hispanic Southwest (1860-1910)* at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center.

exhibit, and *How Am I?* gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about their bodies by exploring heart rate, lung capacity, blood pressure, and body strength. If you're brave, you even can find out how your body compares to the best of the Denver Broncos.

At the **Children's Museum** itself, you can see *Shooting Back*, an exhibit of photographs by homeless children.

Across from the Brown Palace hotel in Denver is the **Museum of Western Art**. There you will find a collection of paintings, watercolors, and bronze sculptures by artists Thomas Moran, Frederic Remington, Georgia O'Keefe, and others who lived or traveled extensively in the West from the fur-trapper era through World War II. The artwork is arranged chronologically, thus examining the western frontier as it evolved—beginning prior to the impact of European civilization, going through the westward expansion, and ending with the death of the Old West and into the 20th century. Also, *Works on Paper from the Permanent Collection* presents approximately 25 works in pen, watercolor, mixed media, and gouache.

For coin enthusiasts, there are a plethora of possibilities at the **Museum of the American Numismatic Association** in Colorado Springs. *Vive la France* offers a numismatic perspective on the era of the French Revolution. *Colorado Gallery* presents Colorado's importance in terms of mining, metallurgy, and minting. And *Hall of Nations*, designed for the visually impaired, includes large models of coins provided by mints from around the world. It is accompanied by standard and braille captioning.

At the **Mizel Museum of Judaica** in Denver, *Creativity Under Duress: From Gulag to Glasnost* presents more than 65 works from 11 Soviet Jewish artists—known as the Aleph Group. In 1975, this group mounted an exhibition of "nonofficial" artworks in two Moscow apartments, and 9,000 people came to see their work; for some of the group, the exhibit was really an act of protest and an attempt to provoke the government to allow them to emigrate. This exhibit presents works from the earlier period of repression in the Soviet Union and from the current period of *glasnost* and emigration.

At the **Denver Art Museum**, you can see *Rick Hock: Codex and Canto Images*. Using printmaking and photographic techniques, Hock creates one large image, or visual text, from many smaller ones. The images, which are compiled from a bank of 35-millimeter slides made from books, cartoons, and news clippings, are meant to be seen as well as read. The artist selects the images by theme and then uses a special copy machine to reproduce them on Polaroid film. But instead of using the photo itself, Hock uses the chemistry face (the paper you pull away from a Polaroid photo) and burnishes it onto paper. *Robert Ecker: Paintings and Works on Paper*, also at the art museum, presents 76 mezzotints, monoprints, watercolors, and oils. Ecker, a professor at the University of Colorado, brings together unrelated objects in his work; by placing familiar objects in unfamiliar surroundings, he questions their implied symbolism.

At the **Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum**, *The Seasoned Eye* celebrates the creativity, talent, and curiosity of older Americans. This juried exhibition of 50 photographs shot by men and women older than 50 represents the winners of *Modern Maturity* magazine's photography competition.

In Denver, the **Colorado Historical Society** presents *Advertising Art in Colorado: A Century of Growth*. Radio jingles, television ads, neon lights, and flashing signs commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Denver Advertising Federation—the first association of its kind to be formed in the U.S. Also on view at the historical society is *20th Century Colorado: The First Decade, 1900–1910*. Photographs, driving dusters, raccoon coats, and art nouveau objects bring visitors back to the early days of the 20th century.

Opening on May 17 at the **Gallery of Contemporary Art** on the campus of the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, is *Colorado Collects: Art of the 20th Century*. The exhibition showcases artworks by Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro, and Andy Warhol, all on loan from private and corporate Colorado collections.

Several special exhibits are on view at the **Denver Museum of Natural History**. Take your pick from among *Anne Frank in the World*, *Society of Animal Artists*, *Treasures of Costa Rica: Art and Archaeology of the Rich Coast*, *Under the Midnight Sun*, and *Urban Wildlife*.

In Littleton, the **Littleton Historical Museum's** 14 acres of living history offer a schoolhouse and businesses from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and an 1860s homestead. Inside the museum building, *Lilly of the Valley* uses children's toys, a recreated dining room, school equipment, and costumes to inform visitors about Littleton's past.

Finally, meeting attendees might well choose to get out and enjoy the budding Colorado springtime with trips to **Cheyenne Mountain Zoological Park**, **Denver Zoological Gardens**, or **Rocky Mountain National Park**. □

Reprise of a Crisis

Now that Energy Woes Once Again are Among the Forces of Change Confronting Museums, Strategic Planning Takes On New Importance

By Robert A. Matthai

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the coal strike of 1978, the natural gas shortage of 1977, the oil embargo of 1973–74: Four times in 18 years, U.S. dependence on foreign oil has led to price hikes for, and often acute shortages of, energy. And four times U.S. museums have been forced to confront critical questions: How can collections and buildings be protected during energy shortages? How can increased energy costs be prevented from eroding already tight operating budgets?

Those museums that had approached these problems systematically in recent years were best positioned to minimize the impact of the energy cost increases associated with the Gulf War. On the other hand, museums that had treated previous energy problems on a one-time or "crisis" basis once again had to figure out how to respond to the problem of the moment.

The situation in 1991 is perhaps more complicated than in earlier years. On the positive side (as of late March), there is a cease-fire in the Gulf, gasoline and oil prices are down, and there are a few hints that the recession might even be starting to abate. On the negative side, government support for museums (particularly at state and local levels) is falling, and there is greatly increased competition among all nonprofit organizations for scarcer and harder-to-win philanthropic dollars. Projected state and federal budget deficits suggest that funding for museums and other cultural organizations will be even tighter in 1992.

These changes at the world, national, and local levels create an unstable environment in which museums must nonetheless continue to find ways to operate.

It has been said that change is the only constant, and managing change is one of the biggest challenges facing museum directors and trustees. How a museum responds to energy problems is often indicative of its overall style of management and operation. Some museums have a clear sense of their mission and carefully thought-out strategic or long-range plans for achieving institutional goals. When energy dislocations occur, it is relatively simple for these museums to review their needs and priorities and solve their energy problems in the context of their mission and goals.

Other museums, however, have not taken charge of their destinies and seem to float from month to month and year to year, coping with crises as they arise and lacking a clear sense of how to achieve their goals over time. When energy problems suddenly develop, museum trustees and staff members may unintentionally distract themselves from longer-term goals and objectives.

Museums' basic energy concerns today re-

Robert A. Matthai chaired the AAM Energy Committee from 1974 to 1983. His company, Robert A. Matthai Associates, provides planning and development services to museums.

The computerized energy management system added in 1990 to a three-year-old wing of the Delaware Art Museum already has provided significant energy cost savings.

main much the same as in earlier years. During the period 1974–83, the Energy Information Clearinghouse, AAM, the American Association for State and Local History, and other service organizations and federal agencies cooperated in analyzing and taking steps to meet museums' special energy needs and problems, which fall into four broad categories: abrupt shifts in temperature and relative humidity within museum buildings, caused by energy shortages or curtailments; reduced income caused by a drop in tourism; federal and state energy policies; and energy conservation and management techniques suitable for museums.

■ *Energy and climate control.* Some museums have long since assessed the climatic sensitivities of their collections, developed contingency plans for coping with energy shortages, and upgraded their heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (H.V.A.C.) systems to meet climatic needs cost-effectively. Although the Gulf cease-fire has greatly reduced the chances of major energy shortages, the recession's pressure on operating budgets may lead some museums to consider saving money by resetting thermostats at night or on days when the buildings are unoccupied. Unfortunately, these frequent temperature shifts lead to sudden changes in relative humidity, which in turn expose collections to stress, immediate damage, and long-term destruction.

Humidity that is too low can warp wood, split parchment, or embrittle fibers. Excessive humidity can buckle oil paintings, soften or dissolve glue joints, and promote bronze disease and mold growth. Furthermore, changing humidity levels inside buildings can cause moisture to be pushed or sucked through exterior walls, which can lead to structural damage. Stressing or damaging collections or buildings by frequently changing relative humidity must be avoided or limited.

■ *Reduced income.* In the latter half of 1990, higher air fares and gasoline costs resulted in reduced tourism in many parts of the U.S. and diminished attendance at museums and historical sites, especially in rural areas. The impact of the resulting drop in earned income was heightened by the recessionary climate, which had already depressed earned and contributed income at many museums.

The museums that coped best with previous drops in tourism seemed to be those that had—or quickly developed—marketing plans to restore or increase awareness and attendance. Establishing creative links with members of the press and support groups also seemed to help with attendance. Needless to say, it is better to have these kinds of marketing plans and programs in place before emergencies arise.

One possible trouble spot in 1991 and 1992 is the prospect of reductions in school bus trips to museums caused by drastic cuts in the budgets of state and local governments and school districts. Contingency plans for increased promotion and outreach, then, are in order.

It is not often thought of this way, but energy, planning, and fund raising are often interrelated. As the recession continues, and as the competition for philanthropic support increases, donors will more than ever want to know that their money is going to well-managed museums whose missions, goals, and priorities are clear. By itself, evidence of sound energy management and institutional planning will not guarantee a grant, of course; but such evidence can do much to distinguish well-managed museums from those that operate on a crisis-oriented basis.

■ *Federal and state energy policies.* In the 1970s, federal and state energy regulators did

Advice for Sound Energy Management

Reducing or limiting energy costs is desirable any time, but even more so during a recession. Indeed, sound energy management can free funds for use in other areas of museum operations.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, some museums carried out detailed energy audits of their facilities and made operational and structural changes to reduce energy use and costs. Some museums even borrowed from their endowments to pay for more efficient climate-control and lighting systems that paid back their initial costs in a few years and now provide ongoing energy cost savings. Unfortunately, the majority of museums carried out "quick fix" procedures and dropped the matter as soon as the crisis at hand was over.

Fortunately, during the 1970s and early '80s, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities, the Department of Energy, and several other agencies underwrote a series of workshops, case studies, and publications on museums' energy needs and problems. This material was analyzed, condensed, and assembled into *Energy Management for Museums and Historical Societies,* which was published in 1982 and is expected to be reprinted later this year. (To get on the mailing list for information about the reprint, contact the Energy Information Clearinghouse, Robert A. Matthai Associates, 24 Beverly Drive, Avon, Conn. 06001.)

The clearinghouse also publishes *Arts/Energy Bulletins* and other materials on energy shortages, action steps, relevant legislation and regulations, and other topics. It also operates an Energy Hot Line, which records inquiries 24 hours a day and provides responses: (203) 673-0554.—*R.A.M.*

not know that museums have special energy needs and problems and assumed that energy conservation measures that work in office buildings or factories would be suitable for museums. Thus, when in 1978 a federal energy regulation was established requiring public buildings to set back their thermostats at night and on weekends, it took an extensive informational effort to help Congress and the U.S. Department of Energy understand that many of the procedures and regulations suited to most types of buildings actually would be harmful to museums and their collections.

Because states also have certain powers to regulate energy supply and usage, additional informational efforts were required at the state level. Unfortunately, much of this work was done so long ago that there are entirely new casts of characters in the state and federal energy offices, and many of the previous laws and regulations have expired. Further, the energy policies of the current administration emphasize placing responsibility for setting allocation and conservation policy at the state level. If energy-supply disruptions and price hikes occur again, it will once again be necessary to educate and inform the legislators and regulators, particularly those at the state level, about museums' special energy needs.

■ *Energy conservation.* There are many opportunities for museums to reduce or limit energy costs and to provide necessary levels of climate control for their collections. Two examples are provided by the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington and the Hyde Collection in Glens Falls, N.Y.

The Delaware Art Museum is a fine arts museum with an area of 60,000 square feet and an annual operating budget of $2 million. During the 1987 addition of a new wing, the museum upgraded its H.V.A.C. equipment. In 1990, Director Stephen Bruni decided to achieve a greater degree of control of relative humidity and temperature and, after obtaining grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and a local foundation, installed a computerized energy management system that allows monitoring and control of 16 building zones.

Bruni reports several positive results. It now is possible to maintain narrower ranges of temperature and relative humidity, which are important for the institution's climate-sensitive collections and exhibits. Increased monitoring capability revealed some problems in the new H.V.A.C. equipment, which the contractors subsequently were obligated to rectify. Finally, the computerized controls and the more finely tuned H.V.A.C. equipment have reduced museum energy costs by some 15 percent in the past six months. This means it will take approximately 27 months to pay back the cost of the controls, after which the museum will reap the full benefit of the energy savings on a continuing basis.

The Hyde Collection in Glens Falls is a historic house museum with an annual operating budget of $660,000 and an area of 21,000 square feet in three interconnected buildings. Hyde House was built in 1912 as a residence for Louis Fiske and Charlotte Pruyn Hyde. In 1963, the house was turned into a public museum to display the Hyde's collection of Old Master paintings, sculpture, prints, and drawings as well as European furniture, textiles, pewter, ceramics, and glass.

Because of its age and type of construction, Hyde House never was able to provide the temperature and relative humidity levels recommended for storage and display of collections. Indeed, because of an acute shortage of space, collections not on display were stored in closets, bathrooms, and an enclosed sun porch.

In 1985, the Hyde Collection developed a long-range plan that called for increased space for educational programs, exhibits, and collections storage, and for an improved H.V.A.C. system serving Hyde House, the administrative offices in adjacent Cunningham House, and a new wing connecting the two buildings. The long-range plan also called for a major capital campaign to implement the plan. It was determined that the expanded facilities and enhanced climate control for collections storage and exhibit areas would increase the Hyde's energy bill, so the campaign goal included increasing the endowment to help meet higher operating costs.

A successful campaign for $7 million was carried out, and in 1989 the new wing, designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes, was opened. According to Director Cecilia Esposito, "Our facilities have nearly tripled in size, but control of temperature and relative humidity in exhibit and collections storage areas have greatly improved. And given today's economic climate, we are very glad we made increased endowment part of our recent capital campaign."

The energy problems associated with the Gulf War appear to be over for now, but problems of energy management remain in many—perhaps most—museums. In any case, it is not prudent to wait until the *next* energy crisis. Right now, energy management techniques can make a difference in museum operating budgets and can fit easily into museums' long-range and facilities planning processes. □

Consider Carving Small Masterpieces Out of a Monolith

By Bret Waller

A recent exhibition here at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, organized by our senior curator Ellen W. Lee, consisted of only four Georges Seurat paintings (the last four landscapes he completed before his death in 1890) and six related studies. A scholarly symposium and other public programs were organized around the exhibition, and a catalogue was published.

Response from the public, the critics, and the academic community was enthusiastic. That one of the paintings is in our permanent collection added to the show's local appeal, and the fact that we were opening a new wing at the time certainly didn't hurt.

Bret Waller is director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

Now we are attempting to assess the results. Clearly *Seurat at Gravelines: The Last Landscapes* was a success. Can that success be repeated? Should it be? Taking the last question first, we began by asking ourselves about the advantages of a very small exhibition. Apart from the obvious ones of requiring less space and perhaps costing less to mount, the major benefit is one that accrues to the visi-

tor: The experience is compassable, comprehensible. You can see every work in the exhibition, examine each one carefully, and emerge feeling restored and elated instead of numbed by excess. It was obvious that visitors to *Seurat at Gravelines* spent considerably more time looking at each of the paintings and reading the related didactic materials than does the typical visitor to the typical blockbuster.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the "blockchipper" is not without its drawbacks. However suggestive it may be, the *haiku* hardly can compete with the epic in terms of sheer volume of information conveyed. Some things worth saying cannot be said in 25 words or less. There is also the matter of context: For an artist as well known as Seurat, many visitors bring to the exhibition a familiarity with the artist's oeuvre and an already established mental framework. But how would they deal with the four last landscapes of an unknown, 19th-century Latin-American female artist? In such a case, wouldn't a much larger body of work have to be presented in some form to provide a context in which the works could be appreciated?

One question, then, is whether the miniexhibition depends for its effectiveness on the presentation of work by established, familiar artists to a greater extent than do other formats. Another concern is whether the minishow, however vigorously it is applauded in concept, really can regularly attract the critical and public attention needed to make it a viable alternative to the blockbuster.

John Russell, while observing that "ours is shaping up as the age . . . of the very small exhibition," still felt compelled to review or recall half-a-dozen such morsels in a space that normally would have been devoted to one or at most two big exhibitions. Not that the success of a show can be measured entirely in terms of column inches of copy written about it, but it's hard to focus the public's attention on an exhibition so small that it escapes critical notice altogether. No reviews, no audience; no audience, no aesthetic or educational impact.

I am not aware of any audience re-

search that has dealt specifically with miniexhibitions, but one recent study touched on something that might prove relevant. The J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for Education in the Arts have, during the past three years, sponsored a series of focus groups held with museum visitors and nonvisitors in 11 different U.S. cities. In more than one of these focus groups (which took place in cities with major collections), when nonvisitors were asked what they expected to find on their first visits to their local museums, they said something like, "Not too much; probably they have mostly copies. I know they bring in important things from elsewhere, but they must not be too proud of what they own, because I never hear anything about it." Not an unreasonable inference, though in the instances in question, entirely mistaken. But whose fault is that? Certainly we in art museums do a better job of informing the public about celebrity visiting *objets d'art* than about the masterpieces that live in our galleries. I suspect that something similar holds true for our small exhibitions as well. The bigger the exhibition, the bigger the public relations budget.

But if we're serious about wanting to reorder our priorities, make better use of our own collections, and do fewer, smaller, and better exhibitions, can we really continue to rely on word of mouth, membership mailings, and the vagaries of critical comment to attract an audience? Our colleagues in the performing arts have learned that audiences must be wooed and won—and wooing and winning take time, ingenuity, effort, and money. There may be an inverse ratio between the size of an exhibition, all other things being equal, and the cost of bringing an audience to it.

High-quality minishows, in that case, don't necessarily cost less than large ones; the money is just spent differently. Hardly a revolutionary insight, but one that is just beginning to dawn on us. In Indianapolis, we are committed to continuing our efforts to chip away at the blockbuster, but carving small masterpieces out of a monolith turns out to be a bit more difficult than it looks. □

Treasure These Explorations Into The World of Museum Possibilities

By Kenneth L. Ames

Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations
Stephen E. Weil, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990. 173 pp. $22.50 hardback, $11.95 paperback

Want to put a little positive passion back into your work? Read *Rethinking the Museum.* Optimistic, idealistic, visionary, energizing, invigorating: These words only begin to describe a book that may change forever your understanding of museums and their potential. *Rethinking the Museum* brings together in a single, readable volume 19 of Stephen Weil's essays and exhortations.

Well written, closely reasoned, and concise—no chapter runs more than 20 pages—Weil's writings explore creatively the ways museums can better use their resources "in the service of society and of its development."

Stephen Weil, deputy director of the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C., is one of the most inspiring figures in the museum field. Like many who inspire, Weil draws on traditional values and assumptions. Like contemporary motivational experts, he fuses high-minded idealism, tough-minded logic, and a persuasive style. Like many successful preachers, Weil offers people goals they can believe in, dreams they can aspire to.

These strategies and others are used in the book to evoke and promote positive, powerful, and in the end, compelling visions of what museums might be.

The book's format, a collection of speeches and short essays originally crafted for different occasions, has both strengths and weaknesses. Each piece stands on its own, easily comprehended, easily digested. But there is no room for extended discussions of social or cultural philosophy. Readers will have to look for those between the lines. And there is little opportunity to explore the ramifications of a given argument. Readers will have to puzzle that out for themselves. But none of this may be necessary or even appropriate for this collection of "meditations" on ways museums can become more important and more meaningful parts of late-20th-century life. Much of the power of these pieces resides in their brevity, their clarity, their punch.

Rethinking the Museum is divided into three sections. The first explores issues of purpose, the second management, and the third law. All sections contain important ideas and suggestions, but Weil seems at his best in the first two, perhaps because legal discussions are everywhere and inevitable, but informed and stimulating discussions of museum mission still are rare.

Essays in the first section examine the proliferation of museums, intellectual premises inhibiting museum accomplishment, the potential for a productive division of labor between large and small museums, the centrality of ideas to exhibits, and a new way to define fundamental museum responsibilities. A few words about some of these provide insight into the author's thinking and style.

For Weil, proliferating museums are appropriate responses to changes in society and culture. Establishment of museums will only cease when change itself becomes obsolete. In brief, museums are positive evidence of a dynamic and healthy society. But as society changes, the premises underlying museums must change, too.

In his second essay, Weil rejects two premises widespread in the museum field. The first is that all museums are equal; the second that increased professionalism is an appropriate goal. Important political factors underlie the democratic notion of museum equality, but they do not conceal its falseness. Museums are, in fact, immensely varied. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak meaningfully of museums without taking their differences into account.

To help promote clarity in discussing museums, Weil proposes a taxonomy, or classification system, roughly equivalent to that used in higher education. This system would be descriptive, not evaluative. Classification could be based on budget, attendance, staff salaries, staff size, publication record, kind and amount of grants received, advanced degrees among staff members, length of visitors' stay, or significance of collection. Such a system would respect very real diversity among museums while enabling the compilation of useful data about comparable institutions.

As for the benefits of increased professionalism, Weil has doubts. He argues that a focus on professional concerns may blind museum staff members to more appropriate considerations, particularly service to their communities. In retracing the controversy generated by the China Trade Museum's move from Milton to Salem, Mass., Weil notes that the impact of the loss on Milton rarely was mentioned. This he blames on a misguided professionalism that places

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value on formalistic matters but remains largely insensitive to the concerns of the local community.

Weil finds attention to issues of community all too rare in museum literature and training. Professionalization is strong on technical proficiency but weak on sensitivity to community. He maintains that there is a critical link between community service, community consent, and community support.

In the third essay, Weil returns to the theme of large and small museums. He argues that the very real differences between large and small institutions are strengths that should be exploited. Big museums are typically highly bureaucratic and draw most exhibits from their own collections. Small museums, on the other hand, can be much more flexible and devote less gallery space to their collections. The strengths and weaknesses of these two types of institutions can complement each other.

In fact, their differences point to a productive division of labor that might permit museums to engage more fully in the "passion and action" of our time. While large "object-centered museums" preserve our material heritage, smaller "community-centered" museums could concentrate on special exhibits and other programs exploring contemporary issues. The strengths of small museums make them, in the author's view, the best hope for "socially relevant" programs.

The apocryphal National Toothpick Museum plays a central role in the next essay, one of Weil's most engaging. The museum is a well-managed and in many ways exemplary institution. Its collections are in splendid shape, its records complete, and its scholarship impeccable. But its subject matter is ridiculous. Toothpicks may support a hobby, but not a major museum. Weil introduces this hypothetical institution to explore three recent museum tendencies: emphasizing function rather than purpose; considering collecting and care of objects "at the heart of the museum enterprise"; and emphasizing technical proficiency.

Weil's evaluation of each is incisive, provocative, enlightening. He systematically exposes their limitations, then

points out ways museums might go further toward making "some real and powerful impact on the lives of those who use them." Museums have always offered information, but they also can consciously and deliberately disseminate values, provide aesthetic and affective experiences, generate intellectual stimulation, and even empower visitors culturally.

The author ends by pointing out that all of these are possible when a museum is driven by purpose rather than by devotion to objects: "It is ideas, viewpoint, and insight that finally powers the museum—not the care of collections."

The second section of the book contains nine essays that deal with issues of museum management. Most reiterate Weil's insistence on clearer, people-centered goals and priorities. One piece, written with Earl Cheit, succinctly defines a well-run museum. As the authors note, good management is a necessary prerequisite to a good museum.

Other pieces deal further with the dubious virtues of professionalization, with the need for museums to be guided by a single, shared vision, and the importance of content knowledge for a director. One provides a laudatory account of the Museum Management Institute. Three others explore issues related to deaccessioning. The last group of essays revolve around legal issues, including limits of ownership, repatriation, and the display of imitations.

Weil is not shy about expressing his views. Not all of them will be popular. But most readers share his goal of making museums "socially relevant institutions." Most believe that museums can not only "deepen our understanding of the past but also enrich our lives and enhance in powerful ways our ability to shape a better future for ourselves, our descendants, and our communities."

Many readers will find this a genuinely stirring book. Weil's dedication and conviction are contagious, his rhetoric persuasive. *Rethinking the Museum* is a compelling call to reexamine the purposes and potential of those "constantly evolving social artifacts" we call museums. □

MARKETPLACE

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Scout Headhunters as You Would Any Other Vendor: Carefully

For an increasing number of museums, recruiting a new director is too important a task to leave to a classified newspaper advertisement and a search committee made up of part-time trustees. Museum directors (and top-ranked department heads) must have many of the qualifications and skills of a corporate executive: They must be able to handle complicated financial and legal issues, manage highly educated employees, and build financial support for their institutions.

These people just don't knock on doors and ask for a job. Therefore, museums increasingly are turning to professional executive recruiters—also called executive search consultants or, more commonly, headhunters.

Executive recruiting is not for every museum. A county historical society or small city art museum that expects to hire an executive from the local community might not need the services of someone who recruits from a nationwide pool of potential candidates. But for institutions that need to conduct a wide search, a recruiter might be more a necessity than a luxury: Perhaps the museum is hoping to bring new ideas to a staid organization by attracting a director with experience in a similar but larger institution. Or perhaps a fiscal crisis has forced the board to look for a chief executive who has business as well as curatorial training. Whatever the reason, the institution should be prepared to invest not only money but time. The search process—finding potential candidates, presenting them to the board of trustees, and making a hiring decision—may take anywhere from four to six months or longer.

Executive recruiting is often thought of as a service for private industry, but in recent years firms specializing in headhunting for nonprofit organizations, including museums, have debuted. Several national firms also have expanded their recruiting into the nonprofit sector.

Although each recruiter has his or her own style, most follow similar steps. The first usually is a review of the institution—defining its needs and determining the museum's standing in the wider museum community. This review typically follows one or more visits to the museum and meetings with its board or search committee.

Once the board makes a decision, the recruiter typically makes the job offer and negotiates salary and benefits. Having the recruiter perform this task takes the pressure off the board and eases the leadership transition

The recruiter, working with the board, then writes a thorough job description, reflecting the museum's mission and goals. The consultant then begins looking for potential candidates. Some of the people the recruiter gets in touch with might be potential candidates, but most are professionals or former professionals with extensive contacts in the field; they suggest actual candidates and provide information about the "market" for a particular type of museum director.

James Abruzzo, the New York-based managing director of A.T. Kearney, Inc.'s, national nonprofit executive search practice, says he is likely to talk with between 80 and 100 individuals to come up with a group of a dozen candidates. He then reviews their credentials and selects a group of four, five, or six finalists. Abruzzo says he first approaches people by telephone to determine their interest and ask for recommendations. Freda Mindlin, president of Opportunity Resources, Inc., of New York, says she usually talks with "dozens of potential candidates and 'resource people'" before narrowing her search to between three and six candidates.

Mindlin and other recruiters also advertise in publications likely to reach potential candidates, such as *Aviso,* AAM's monthly newsletter. Mindlin says advertising often "coaxes people out of the woodwork." Abruzzo says he usually does not advertise, because many potential candidates are not actively looking for new jobs and thus not likely to be reading job placement ads.

After interviewing candidates, the executive recruiter next prepares a written report on each candidate, describing his or her strengths and weaknesses. References and college records are fully checked. The reports are given to the museum's search committee or board, which then decides whether to interview all or some of the candidates. The recruiter normally schedules the interviews.

In the end, of course, it is entirely the board's decision who will be offered the job. But executive recruiters sometimes make recommendations, selecting perhaps the top two candidates. Once the board makes a decision, the recruiter typically makes the job offer

and negotiates the salary and benefits package. This, recruiters say, is a crucial service, because salary and benefit negotiations between a finalist and the board can cause a certain amount of tension. Having the recruiter perform this task takes the pressure off the board and eases the transition for the new director.

Most recruiters say they follow up their assignments several weeks after the director has begun the new job. Often, a chat with the recruiter helps smooth over getting-to-know-each-other problems.

Executive recruiting, being an art more than a science, doesn't always lead to success stories. If the match proves to be a failure, and the director and the board soon part ways, some recruiters will conduct a new search for no additional fee, charging the museum only for their expenses.

The executive search process can be costly, which puts executive recruiters beyond the reach of many institutions. The standard industry fee is one third of the newly hired executive's first year's salary, plus expenses. For a museum director earning, say, $75,000, this comes out to a minimum of $25,000. Some recruiters won't consider working for institutions who don't pay highly competitive salaries, because their fees would not be high enough to make the assignment profitable. Others will negotiate their fees, making their expertise affordable to smaller institutions. "It is costly, but it's not out of the question for a small or medium-size museum," insists Abruzzo.

Museums ultimately should approach hiring a recruiter much as the recruiter approaches the search for suitable job candidates: Check out two or three search firms before hiring one. Ask for references from other museums of similar size and type, but go beyond the search firms' most recent assignments.

Find out how museum directors they helped find five or 10 years ago are working out long after the honeymoon is over. If those directors and boards are reasonably happy with their working relationships, it's a good sign the executive search firm did its job well.—*Evan Roth*

City Museum: Historical Institution Or Horse of a Different Color?

Museum News, December 1931

If all museums are in a sense history museums, "It is a sad fact that many museums do not make history." So said a trustee in decrying the tyranny of taxonomy in a speech delivered to the 1931 AAM annual meeting. John Van Pelt, trustee of the Museum of the City of New York, said that limiting museum categories to art, history, natural history, and "commercial and industrial museums" diminishes their potential public service. The speech was published in *Museum News* under the title *The Museum as a Guide to the Life of a City*.

The comments served as prologue to remarks on the Museum of the City of New York, which many in the profession regarded as a historical museum. Van Pelt admitted history plays a part: "All of the facets of the city—certainly all of the bright or valuable ones—must and will be shown and illustrated in their progression, as in a museum of natural history the evolution of the bird is depicted or in the museum of commerce and industry is shown the progress of agriculture." To the degree that all museums are historical, he said, the museum of the city is no more—and probably less—so than art and natural history museums.

The reason rests on his contention that the underlying aim of such an institution is sociological. "If it does nothing to improve the life of the city and of the city dweller, it loses its principal opportunity and fails in its chief duty. While it may be interesting to tell New Yorkers how the Indians were done out of a valuable island for a song, how the Dutch came, and how most of them went, it is far more vital to teach the children of today the remedies for congested municipal districts, who pays the difference between the five cents and what a subway ride costs when the city takes over the subways, what advantages accrue to the city dweller when the buildings that line the streets are beau-

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tiful, whether excess condemnation pays, how the city is fed, what happens when the racketeer appears, what difficult problems the Police Commissioner meets, and so on. . . ."

According to Van Pelt, city museums should be prognosticators of future urban problems resulting from, for example, poor planning of city streets. The functions of exhibition and instruction merge in treating such subjects, because the primary exhibit in a museum like the Museum of the City of New York is the living, breathing city of New York. "Classes should be taken to the docks, the markets, the freight yards, the City Hall. . . . To sum it all up, our great work will be to help New Yorkers and New York's visitors to understand New York."

To the degree that all museums are historical, wrote New York's John Van Pelt, the museum of the city is no more—and probably less—so than art and natural history museums

Van Pelt also envisioned a number of branch museums to carry out his institution's mission. "I think one such branch might be a squalid flat in a readily accessible slum. There are many such. It would show the prosperous how the other half lives. Another branch museum (if one of our wealthy magnates might realize that his expensive house will not be salable after his death, so would leave it to our museum) should be the residence of a wealthy and cultured man, furnished and maintained as during his lifetime. It would show the less fortunate how the other half lives."

Van Pelt concluded with the enthusiastic hope that museums like his not be lumped in with other historical museums pure and simple. Rather, they "deserve a classification of their own."—*Donald Garfield*

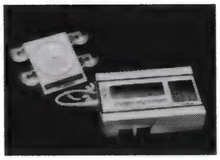
Museums Scurry in the Search For Middle Ground

Merging interpretive integrity and marketing savvy is an institutional assignment that leaves museums scurrying for an acceptable middle ground: That's the subtle message from *Museum News* readers responding to the March/April *Your Vantage Point* question.

We asked, "Is it possible (and realistic) for museums to retain interpretive control over traditional subjects while still applying some hard-won lessons from their commercial competitors?"

Many respondents voiced support for the idea of finding a way to accommodate both needs, and others saw the issue in more black-and-white terms. A director in New York, for example, writes, "Museums should continue to collect, conserve, study, and display real objects and educate their visitors. This is our unique mission in society. We should not be seduced into chasing after theme-park popularity."

From Baltimore, a reader adds, "Museums must learn how to use innovative techniques to display artifacts and art in ways that will answer the 'stupid' questions of the casual visitor as well as provide technical information for the more experienced viewer. But they also need to be careful that their role as educator not be undermined as a result of mastering these techniques. We live in a mass-media culture and, unfortunately, museums and other educational institutions have had to adapt to the age of television to survive. Adapting, however, does not mean selling out. Education, unlike a television commercial, is not meant to be 'luscious.' The purpose of education is to challenge our minds—a process that can be difficult and troubling, because knowledge breaks down ignorance. In a museum, works should not be judged by how much they entertain the viewer (like effective commercials),



but by how well they represent an important artistic expression."

A New Jersey curator says, "Because of their high cost, only those institutions that are 'well off' can utilize commercial techniques. Perhaps all museums should center on the object and use basic interpretive techniques rather than high-tech ones. Let visitors work a little and read the labels and examine the artifacts. Perhaps we—and the public—have been asking too much from museums."

From Nebraska, a reader writes, "Although I understand the concern over the competition to interpret culture, I believe museums need to be as concerned with *what* our messages are as we are with *who* is controlling the turf."

And a Pennsylvania special projects director adds, "If 'interpretive control' means we are more interested in our

"Given the necessity to compete for audiences, accepting commercial lessons might mean the difference between survival and fiscal suicide"

own opinions than those of visitors, our programs and exhibits will continue to meet our needs and not those of the public. The solution is an exhibition development process that uses visitor research and places an advocate for the visitor on the team."

Finally, this comment from a director of museum development in Georgia: "Museums can retain the integrity of interpretation while also learning valuable lessons about marketing a product; designing displays that are interesting, exciting, and thought provoking; scheduling events/exhibitions to capitalize on their complementary community events; and merchandising products appropriate to exhibition content. Given today's economic climate and the necessity to compete for audiences, accepting these lessons can mean the difference between survival and fiscal suicide." □

Converting Private Wealth To Public Good

By Geoffrey Platt Jr.

In early April, AAM President Ellsworth H. Brown appeared before the House Ways and Means Committee to ask on behalf of America's museum community that Congress extend, broaden, and make permanent the provision (which currently exists for 1991 only) regarding treatment of appreciated property in the tax code. The section in the 1986 tax code that essentially removed the fair market value deduction for donors— those subject to the alternative minimum tax—of appreciated property to charitable organizations had the predicted effect on museums: a downtown in gifts of artwork and objects.

AAM documented that result in a well-publicized multiyear survey, and in 1990, Congress responded with a one-year provision restoring pre-1986 rules— but only for tangible personal property, such as artworks and historical artifacts, and not for such things as securities and real estate.

The efforts of AAM and other nonprofit groups to rid the tax code permanently of the damaging 1986 section faces some major hurdles. First is the federal budget and the economy. Permanent changes to the tax code that result in a loss of revenue to the U.S. treasury are not popular these days. But Congress has dealt often with pressure for change by passing temporary measures, such as the current one regarding appreciated property. These then turn almost instantly into "expiring provisions" or "extenders." Some have been on the books for years and are extended annually, but not without a great deal of effort on behalf of their sponsors.

AAM on April 10 testified in favor of extending the provision, but at the same time, AAM also supports H.R. 1557, which covers all forms of appreciated property permanently. The association views this measure as preferable because it would put to rest donor uncertainty and would assist museum planning. Working in the favor of nonprofit organizations is the relatively small projection for revenue loss that would result from the passage of H.R. 1557—$289 million over five years (the cost for 1991's temporary provision is approximately $20 million).

Another obstacle is the perception,

"What distinguishes the charitable deduction from other deductions . . . is its redistributive function. Rather than seeking a benefit for the rich, we are seeking to induce them to part with their wealth"

fueled by critics and proponents of a "pure" tax code (that is, a code whose only purpose is to collect revenue, not to promote such specific policies as encouraging charitable donations), that repealing the 1986 appreciated property rules represents a "tax break for the rich." Here museums have a strong rebuttal, one that *Museum News* readers may care to remember as they advocate for repeal on the local level.

It is nicely stated in AAM's testimony: "A charitable contribution to a museum is an act of private investment in a public purpose in which the return is not to the donors but to the public. For that very reason, donors and donees are not merely two halves of yet another special interest working to protect their particular tax break. Museums serve public purposes, not private ones. No other element of tax policy produces so large a ratio of public benefit to private advantage. What distinguishes the charitable deduction from other deductions and credits in the tax laws is its redistributive function. Rather than seeking a benefit for the rich, we are seeking to induce them to part with their wealth. The charitable deduction creates an incentive to give, but it does not eliminate the financial loss which donors experience when they make their gifts."

This notion of converting private wealth to public good is at the core of AAM's argument on this issue. Museums can help by providing AAM with examples of how the 1991 provision is having an effect on gifts to institutions. We already are hearing encouraging reports from many museums, but we need as many as possible to convince Congress that its action for 1991 was good public policy and should be made permanent for all forms of property. Please contact AAM's government affairs department with examples: AAM, 1225 Eye St. N.W., Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 289-9125.

The hurdles are high—and with Congress, the heights are always being adjusted. But the cause is good, and with results from the 1991 provision in hand, museums might be able to see once again a tax code free of a major disincentive to giving. □

Geoffrey Platt Jr. is AAM's director of government affairs.

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Correction

The African art exhibition pictured and cited in *Fighting for Culture's Turf*, March/April, is owned by the Walt Disney Co. and managed by Walt Disney Imagineering in Burbank, Calif., but never has been displayed at Walt Disney World or EPCOT as reported in the article.

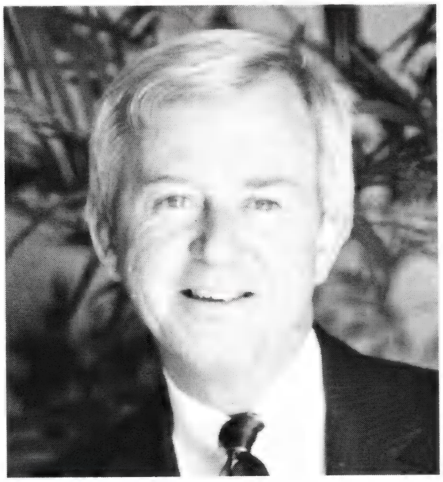
Nurturing the Mind and the Spirit Is a Museum Mission

By Edward H. Able Jr.

A recent trip to Atlanta to speak at the site-dedication of the Atlanta Historical Society's new urban history museum reminded me so clearly of the crucial role museums like the Museum of Atlanta History can play in society. The historical society responded to the need for a new urban history museum to fully represent the interests, people, and history that make up the story of its community.

Urban history centers represent a significant effort on the part of museums to be meaningfully integrated into the fabric of American life and to be an active participant in the continuum of change affecting society. By being a center within a community, they are able to address complex problems—from an environmental crisis to a growing socioeconomic and education gap separating poverty and privilege.

By showing that the past is prologue and that the present is shortly to be a part of that past, urban history centers help to nurture a humane citizenry that has a better understanding of its community and that is therefore better equipped to address the challenges of a global society.



The community of historical institutions constitute the largest category of museums. They represent 55 percent of the total number of museums in this country and account for more than 300 million of the 600 million annual visits to America's museums. The American people are devoted to history, and they will support historical institutions as long as part of the story told is *their* story.

Our museum community faces formidable challenges today: 600 million visits a year, a public demand for more extensive programming and access, the care and management of the billions of objects, and the necessity to become the most pluralistic and inclusive institutions. If we are to meet these challenges and achieve our potential, we must have partners, but our partnership must extend beyond that of financial support: It must encompass a substantial response to the needs of the communities we serve.

For museums to flourish as a part of the education mosaic, we must have the support of the corporate community, government, foundations, and private citizens. As the public struggles with the dilemma of allocating limited resources, museums must constantly remind that in addition to ensuring the physical well-being of our citizens, we also have a responsibility to nurture the minds and the spirit of the American people. This, in the most basic sense, is the mission of our museums. The role and focus of museums within the community is critical to our standing to advance that principle. □

Edward H. Able Jr. is executive director of the American Association of Museums.

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- ☐ H. Less than $200,000
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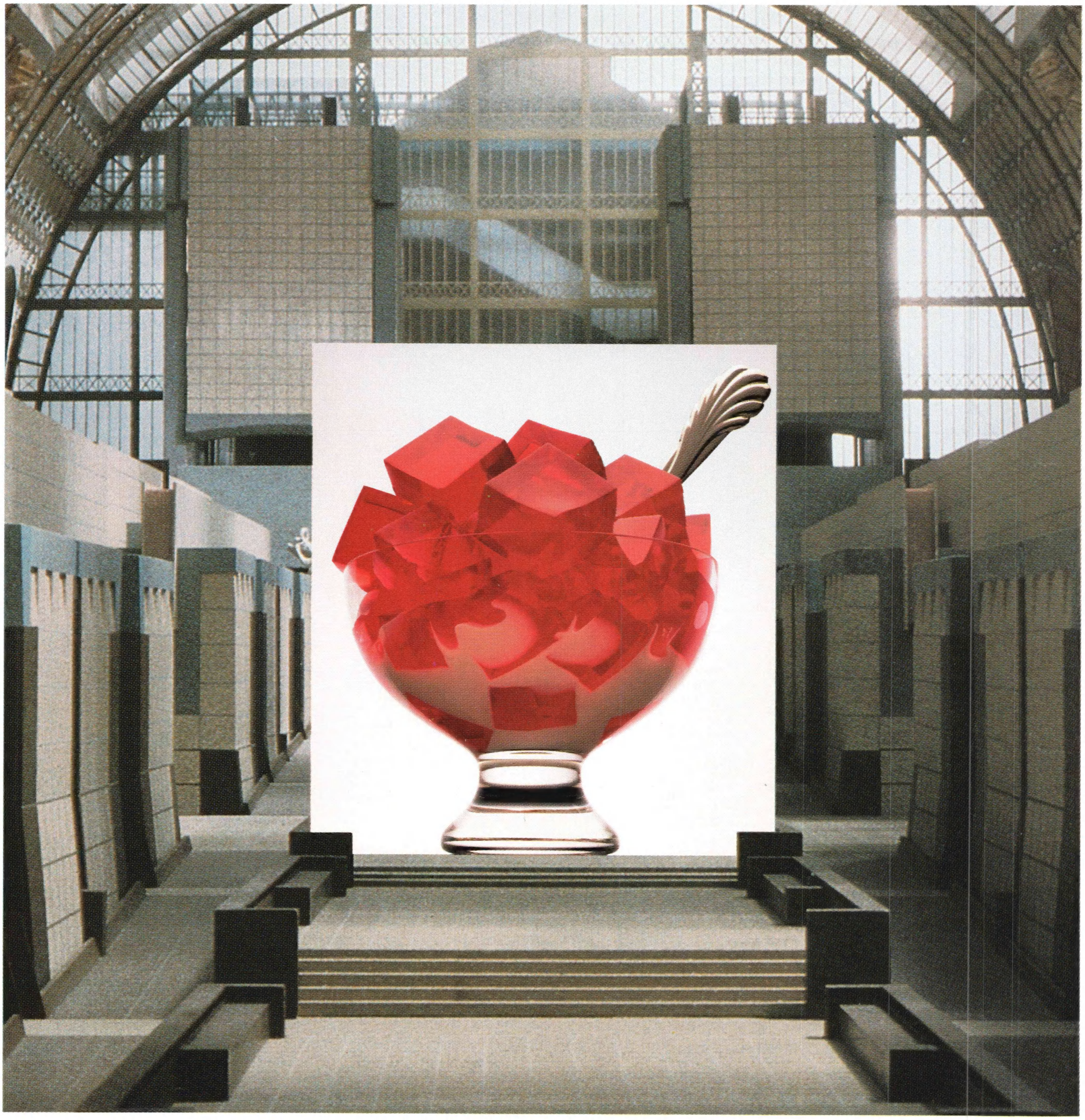

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